DICK HAMILTON'S STEAM YACHT

Wallace Bragelton
Christmas 193

Dick Hamilton's Steam Yacht

"HERE GRIT, OLD FELLOW, GIVE IT TO ME! THAT'S A GOOD DOG!"

DICK HAMILTON'S STEAM YACHT

OR

A YOUNG MILLIONAIRE AND THE KIDNAPPERS

BY

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PREFACE

My Dear Boys:

Perhaps some of you, at one time or another, have had a desire to be cast away on an island in the middle of the ocean, there to have all sorts of adventures, to build a boat, and sail away, maybe; or, at any rate, to have some experience on the great sea.

Something like this fell to the lot of Dick Hamilton, though he was not exactly looking for it, and it is my privilege to give you in this, the third volume of the "Dick Hamilton Series," an account of what happened to the young millionaire when he had purchased a steam yacht, and started out on a cruise with some of his friends.

Dick was marooned on a small island, but, far from that proving a delightful experience, he was very glad to leave, even though it was on a raft, which he and his companions constructed.

How the wealthy youth happened to be marooned there, an account of how he got his yacht, how he foiled the plans of the kidnappers and his uncle Ezra Larabee, how the wrong young

man was spirited away, how Dick gave chase, and the surprising rescue at sea—all this you will find set down in the present book, and I venture to hope that you will like it. Thanking you for the appreciation you have accorded my previous books, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

HOWARD R. GARIS.

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CHAPTER I

DICK'S COMPANY WINS

"HALT!"

The command rang out sharply, and hundreds of cadets came to a stop, standing as stiff as ramrods, with their eyes staring straight ahead at—absolutely nothing.

"Right dress!"

Captain Dick Hamilton stepped out the regulation number of paces in front of his company, wheeled on his heel, looked critically over his command, wheeled about again, and stood at attention. Then he awaited the approach of Colonel Masterly, superintendent of the Kentfield Military Academy.

"Say, fellows, I hope we're looking all right," whispered Jim Perkins, to his next in line, George Ball. "We want to take first prize, for Dick's sake, and——"

"Silence in the ranks!" exclaimed First Lieutenant Paul Drew. "Here come Colonel Masterly and Major Rockford."

Dick Hamilton never moved from his rigid po-

sition, but with a slight motion of his hand he cautioned his men to maintain order. For it was the final inspection, at the close of the academy for the term, and he wanted his command to have a perfect score.

Farther along the big parade ground were other companies of cadets, in their dress uniforms, and in front of them were other captains, as eager as was Dick to win the coveted medal, which was offered each year for the best appearing command.

"Here come the grand-high-muck-a-mucks!" whispered the irrepressible Perkins. "Stand up straighter, Ball. You're as crooked as a rail fence."

"Silence!" hissed Lieutenant Drew sharply. Dick was almost ready to squirm, in his eagerness to turn around and administer a rebuke, yet he was inwardly laughing at the remark of Perkins. Colonel Masterly, the head of the big school, and the commandant, Major Rockford, were now inspecting the company, which was standing stiffly at the right of Dick's command. The two officers, together with several visitors, and a colonel from the regular army, were critically examining the ranks of anxious cadets.

"I know I've got a speck of dust on my belt," whispered Perkins. Can't one of you fellows brush it off with your bayonet?" and he half turned his head to look at the lad behind him.

"Si——!" began Lieutenant Drew, but he did not finish, for at that moment the squad of officers

approached, having finished with the other company.

Dick stiffened the least bit more in his tracks, if such a thing were possible, and raised his glittering sword in salute. The inspection was on. There was no further chance to improve the appearance of his cadets.

Slowly and carefully the officers looked over the lads, some of whom felt an uncontrollable desire to sneeze, or to scratch the middle of their backs. But they nobly resisted.

Colonel Masterly spoke a few words in a low tone to Major Webster, a retired army officer, who was the academy instructor in military tactics. In turn the latter spoke to Major Rockford, and then to Colonel Whitford, of the regular army. Dick wondered what they were saying, but as they were behind him now he could not hear.

The officers paused in front of the joking Perkins. They seemed to see something.

"Great Scott!" mused Captain Dick Hamilton. "Has Perk disgraced us by putting his belt on wrong side out?" Yet he dared not turn to see. A moment later the inspectors passed on, and Dick breathed easier. Then, as Colonel Masterly and the others passed behind the rear rank of Dick's cadets, finishing their examination, and moved on to the next company, our hero breathed a sigh of relief, and somewhat relaxed his stiff position.

"I feel as if I'd just been to the dentist's," whispered Perkins, though not so quietly but what it carried to every lad in the company.

"Silence, Perk!" commanded Paul Drew, but he shook with inward laughter.

There were two more companies to inspect, and until they had been passed on it would not be known which command had been awarded the prize.

But the delay was not for long, and presently the group of officers returned, and stood in front of Dick's company. Colonel Masterly then announced, in a few, well-chosen words, that the young millionaire's cadets had won the prize, though, he added, that it had been difficult to decide, where there was so much general excellence displayed.

"And so allow me, Captain Hamilton, on behalf of the faculty of the Kentfield Military Academy, to present you and your company this medal," went on Colonel Masterly, and stepping forward he handed Dick a small box, on the white satin lining of which glittered a shield of gold.

"Three cheers for Captain Hamilton and Company B!" called Captain Teddy Naylor, of Company E.

And, though it might have been against strict military rule and practice the applause was given with a will. Dick flushed with pleasure as he saluted, and soon ranks were broken, and the inspection was over.

"Has any one seen Grit?" asked the successful captain, as he and some chums were strolling over the parade ground, after they had left their rifles in the armory racks.

"Here he comes now," remarked Paul Drew. "They had to keep him double chained, I guess, or he'd have nipped the legs of the entire faculty in case the medal hadn't gone to Company B."

"Hi, Grit, old boy!" cried Dick, and a handsome bulldog—that is, handsome as bulldogs go—leaped upon the youth, and wagged his stump of a tail so violently that it was a wonder it was not dislocated, while, at every word from his master, the animal grew so demonstrative that finally, in the excess of joy, he finally rolled over and over on the grass, whoofing out the words he could not speak.

The throng of cadets separated, as the various members of the little party started for their rooms, to get off the tight dress uniforms, and don fatigue suits.

"I say, will you fellows come around to-night?" asked Dick.

"Sure! What for?" asked Paul.

"I'm going to have a little spread in honor of our fellows getting the medal."

"What a thing it is to be a millionaire!" exclaimed Perkins with a mock sigh.

"Oh, cut it out," advised Dick good-naturedly, for he disliked any reference to his wealth, which, at times, was a handicap rather than a help.

"Will Jimmie let you have the grub-fest?" asked Paul, using the cadets' private title for their superintendent.

"Sure. He can't refuse very well, after we won the prize. You fellows come around, and we'll have some fun," and, as there came a chorus of eager assents, Dick Hamilton hurried to his room.

There, even before he rid himself of his uncomfortable uniform, he drew from his pocket a letter which he began to read for perhaps the fifth time. As he perused it a puzzled look came over his face.

"I can't understand why dad is so anxious for me to come home and do some investigating for him," he mused. "I wonder what sort of investigating it can be? Maybe he wants me to turn detective. Perhaps some persons have been demanding money from him, and he wants to find out who they are. Yet it can hardly be that, either. Let's see what he says about it."

Then the young millionaire, who had been so taken up with trying for the annual prize offered for the best appearing company, that he had not had time to properly read a very important letter he had received from his father that day, set himself to the task of trying to fathom what his parent wanted him to do.

He had not read more than a dozen lines, when there sounded a knock on his door, and, opening

it he saw one of the janitors, Corporal Bill Handlee, standing there.

"Well, what is it, Toots?" asked the lad, giving the old soldier the name bestowed on him from the fact that he was always whistling military airs.

"Colonel Masterly wishes to see you, Captain Hamilton."

"All right. Tell him I'll be with him at once."

Dick slipped the letter into his pocket, adjusted his uniform, and hastened out.

"I wonder if I'll ever get time to read my letter without being interrupted," he mused.

CHAPTER II

MR. HAMILTON'S LETTER

Colonel Masterly's summons to the young millionaire was to give him the permission, asked for shortly after the parade, to have a spread in one of the unused rooms of the academy, and once that he was assured that everything was all right, Dick set to work to provide for the good time he anticipated.

He hurried into town, and gave orders to a caterer for a "spread" such as had seldom before been given at Kentfield. Then the lad had to arrange for various details, improvising tables from boards and saw-horses, seeing to the seating arrangements, sending out his verbal invitations, in which Paul Drew helped him, for, as it was impossible to have the entire student-body at the little dinner, Dick had to confine it to his closest friends, and the members of his prize company.

That he had many friends, those of you who have read the previous volumes of this series will testify, though at first, on coming to the military

academy, Dick's millions had been a handicap to him. The son of Mortimer Hamilton, of Hamilton Corners, himself a millionaire many times, Dick had inherited a large fortune from his mother, who had been dead some years; but, as told in the first volume of this series, entitled "Dick Hamilton's Fortune," he was not to have the use of this money until he had complied with certain conditions of Mrs. Hamilton's will.

One stipulation was that Dick must make a paying investment of some of his funds within a year. If he did not do this he was to go and live with a crabbed old uncle, named Ezra Larabee, of Dankville, and attend a boarding school of that relative's selection.

Dick had a taste of what he might expect of his uncle, when he paid a week's visit to Dankville, and he at once made up his mind that if hard work would accomplish it, he would make that paying investment, for he realized that he never could stand life with his uncle and aunt.

The young millionaire tried several schemes for making money, from buying real estate to purchasing shares in a gold mine, but, one after another, they all failed, and the lad was on the verge of having to go and dwell in the gloomy Dankville house, called "The Firs."

How Dick fulfilled the conditions of the will, most unexpectedly, from a small investment he made for a poor youth named Henry Darby, how Grit, the bulldog, routed Uncle Ezra when he

came to take his nephew back home with him, is told in the first volume, as well as how Dick got the best of some sharpers who tried to swindle him.

Secure in the possession of the great fortune his mother had left to him, Dick began to enjoy life, and did much good with his money, while he gave not a little pleasure to those not so well off as himself.

In the second volume, "Dick Hamilton's Cadet Days," our hero was obliged to fulfill another condition of his mother's will. He was to attend a military academy, and win his way up, not only in studies, but in the affections of his classmates, without any influence from his wealth.

How he succeeded again heavy odds, how there were plots and counterplots against him, how he fought a duel with one of the cadets who disliked him, and how he solved the mystery of Corporal Handlee's identity is told in the second book.

Dick's first term ended with a glad surprise, just when it looked as if everything had turned against him, and he came back to Hamilton Corners to spend the summer vacation, having done more than was expected of him in the matter of winning his way.

Dick returned to Kentfield Academy in the fall, and remained there all that winter. He was promoted to a captaincy, and was more popular than ever, winning glory for himself and his mates on the gridiron, for he was one of the best football

players who ever wore moleskin. When the present story opens the summer vacation was again at hand, and during it Dick was destined to have more stirring adventures than had yet fallen to his lot.

It took Dick all the afternoon to complete arrangements for his spread, even though several of his comrades helped him. There were many details, however, which he had to see to himself, but finally he had the assurance of the caterer that everything necessary would be sent out to the academy.

Dick gave his personal check for the cost, and it was not a small sum, but the young millionaire had plenty of money to his credit. Then he hurried home to dress for the affair.

"Oh, you look good enough; come on!" exclaimed Paul Drew to Dick, as the latter was surveying his uniform in a small glass in their room that night, just before the time set for the farewell supper. "This isn't a fancy dress ball, and there aren't going to be any girls at it. Don't primp!"

"I'm not primping, but the tailor made this coat too tight, and I'm afraid if I reach across the table I'll split it down the middle."

"Which, the table or the coat?"

"Both," retorted Dick, and then, to test the garment, he stretched out his arms. There was an ominous ripping sound, and he hastily threw back his shoulders in alarm.

"What did I tell you?" he asked, reproachfully.

"Don't stretch; that's all," advised Paul. "But come on if you're coming."

They descended to the improvised banquet hall. The place was tastefully arranged, except that Toots had taken the cut flowers Dick had ordered—a mass of roses, pinks and smilax—and stuck them into a big water pitcher in the centre of the table.

"Oh, wow! See that!" cried Dick. "It looks like a boarding-house hash-foundry! Here, Paul, help me scatter the posies more artistically. They remind me of a cabbage-head at a county fair; but Toots meant all right."

The two cadets soon had made several bouquets of the flowers, and set them in different places on the table, producing a much more artistic effect. Then Dick stepped back to admire it.

"I smell grub!" cried a voice outside.

"Hash and baked beans!" added another.

"Pickled pigs' feet!" was a third contribution.

"If I can't have quail on toast, stuffed with horse chestnuts and snowballs I'll not play!" howled a fourth.

"Here they come," said Paul, significantly.

"I hear 'em," replied Dick, with a grin.

The door flew open, and in rushed a crowd of the cadets of Dick's company. At the sight of their captain, they stopped momentarily, and several hands rose in salute.

"Drop it!" cried Dick, warningly. "We're here to have fun. The book of rules and military tac-

tics has been burned at the stake. We're all alike, now."

"That is, we're all hungry," added Perkins, with a laugh. "Say, but this is going some; eh, fellows?"

"Talk about a grand spread!" exclaimed Ball. "This puts it all over anything I've been to since my sister had a surprise party."

"Glad you like it," remarked Dick, simply. To do him credit the banquet was really quite an elaborate affair, and he had spared no money to have it just as his cultured taste told him it should be, even if it were an informal affair.

More cadets came piling in, laughing and shouting, until the room was filled.

"Sit down, fellows," invited Dick, and when they were in their chairs he gave orders to the caterer's men to serve the spread. From then on there was heard the clatter of knives, forks and spoons, the rattle of dishes mingling with the talk and laughter of the guests.

"Dick, you've got to make a speech!" shouted Perkins. "Tell us how we won the medal."

"No speeches," mumbled Dick, his mouth half full of roast chicken.

"Speech! Speech! Speech! Speech!" yelled a score of voices. They were not to be denied, and Dick, blushing in spite of his effort to remain cool, stood up.

"All I've got to say is that it was you fellows who won the prize—not me," he said. "I'm proud

of you, proud of—er—and proud of—er—that is—Oh, hang it all! Go on eating. There's lots more when this is gone!" and Dick sat down, amid laughter and applause.

The banquet proceeded amid much merriment. There were songs and college yells, and the musicians hired by Dick added to the din.

"What are you going to do this summer?" asked Paul Drew, who, as first lieutenant, sat at the young captain's right hand.

"Don't know. Haven't exactly made up my mind yet. I want to travel, but I fancy dad has some plans for me. By Jove! that reminds me. I got a letter from him this morning, but I haven't had a chance to read it through and get the hang of it yet, though I've tried half a dozen times. It's something important, but I don't know just what it is."

"Go ahead and read it now," advised Paul. "The bunch is singing the 'Cannon Song' and they won't notice."

"Guess I will," agreed the young millionaire, and he drew out the letter. It was filled with general news of Hamilton Corners, and Mr. Hamilton expressed the pleasure it would be to see his son again, when school closed. Then followed this:

"Now, Dick, I've got what may prove quite a task for you this summer. I don't know what

your plans are, but I hope you will have time to give me a little assistance.

"You remember I once spoke to you of some valuable property your mother owned, and how I planned to form a syndicate and erect a large factory on it. Well, I started the syndicate, got a number of friends interested in it, and we were ready to go ahead when unexpected difficulties cropped up. We found it hard to interest outside capital because of a certain flaw in the title to the property, and, curiously enough, the flaw has to do with some distant relatives of your mother.

"These relatives have disappeared, and I have been unable to get a trace of them. It is very necessary that I find them, and I am in hopes that you can help me. So, Dick, there is work cut out for you this summer, if you wish to do it. Come home as soon as you can after the academy closes, and I will tell you more about this. It is very important, not alone to me, but to a number of comparatively poor persons who have invested money in this enterprise, and who may lose if the affair is not straightened out. I am depending on you to help me."

Dick folded up the letter and put it back in his pocket. His face wore a serious look.

"Any bad news?" asked Paul, anxiously.

"No; only it seems that I'm about to start off on a mysterious quest for missing relatives."

"That sounds good. Wish I had something like

that to occupy me this summer. I hope you have luck."

"Thanks. I haven't the least idea where I'm to go, or how. But dad will explain when I get home."

"Come on, now, everybody! We're going to sing 'Farewell to Old Kentfield'!" cried Ed Watson. "Everybody!"

The cadets leaped to their feet, and soon the strains of the grand old song welled out of the banquet hall. Grit, the bulldog was hoisted to a place of honor on two chairs, beside Dick, and he looked on as if he understood it all.

The banquet was nearing an end, and at last, with a clasping of hands around the tables, and a rendering of another verse of the song, while cheers for Dick were mingled with the strains, the affair came to a close.

"What's your hurry?" asked Paul, as Dick walked toward his room in the barrack building.

"I'm going to pack up to-night, and take the first train for home in the morning. I'm anxious to find out what dad wants of me."

"That's so; you're going off to trail a forty-second grand-aunt, or something like that. Well, I may see you this summer," and the two friends shook hands.

The next morning, after a prolonged series of farewells, Dick and his bulldog took a train for Hamilton Corners, a fair-sized town in one of our middle western states.

"I wonder where dad's quest will lead me?" mused Dick, as the train speeded him homeward. Little did he realize what perils were to follow his search for the missing relatives.

CHAPTER III

DICK'S STEAM YACHT

ENTERING the front hall of his home, some hours later, with Grit leaping joyfully about at his heels, Dick was greeted by Gibbs, the butler, with a warmth warranted by many years of service in the Hamilton family.

"Is my father at home, Gibbs?" asked Dick.

"He's in the library, Mr. Dick. Your uncle is with him."

"My uncle? You mean——?"

"Mr. Larabee," finished the butler.

"Oh!" exclaimed Dick, regretfully. "Uncle Ezra here!" he murmured. "I wonder what's wrong at Dankville? Or, maybe there's some new plan afoot, and that I have, after all, to go and live with him." There was dismay on Dick's face.

For Uncle Ezra Larabee was not a very pleasant individual. He was quite wealthy, but he did not enjoy his money. He had a fine place at Dankville, a village about a hundred miles from Hamilton Corners, but the house, which was

gloomy in itself, was hidden in the midst of a grove of dark fir trees, that made it more gloomy than ever. Inside scarcely a room was open to the sunlight, and once, when on his trial-visit, Dick had opened the parlor to look at some pictures, his Aunt Samanthy exclaimed in horror that the apartment was never used save for funerals.

Dick's Uncle Ezra was a curious, crabbed sort of a man, who doubtless meant well, but who had a queer way of showing it. He liked order and neatness to extreme, and there was not a misplaced stick or a stone about his farm and house. He even disliked to have persons step on the gravel walks, for fear of dislodging some of the small stones, and spoiling the trim symmetry of the paths.

Mr. Larabee was very fond of money—too fond, Mr. Hamilton used to think, for the millionaire was of a generous disposition. Uncle Ezra never could reconcile himself to Dick having such a fortune in his own right. More than once he and his nephew had quarreled over what Uncle Ezra called the "foolishness" of Mrs. Hamilton, his sister, leaving so much money to a mere youth. Of a sour disposition, hating to spend a cent unnecessarily, somewhat bitter against Dick's habit of making his money bring him pleasure, and helping others with his wealth, it is no wonder that when Uncle Ezra came to Hamilton Corners Dick was not happy. Mr. Hamilton himself was

not overly-fond of his brother-in-law, but he always treated him well.

"I suppose I may as well go in the library, say how d'ye do to my respected relative, and get a bad job over with," remarked Dick, in no pleasant frame of mind at the information Gibbs furnished. "Uncle Ezra will be sure to scold me for 'wasting my time,' as he calls it, at the military school, and he's positive to make a fuss about Grit. He always does. Grit, old man, I guess you'd better stay out in the hall, until we get this business over with. You remember Uncle Ezra, don't you?"

Grit whined, and growled. Evidently he did remember. It was no easy matter to make him stay away from Dick, and out in the hall, but he knew when to mind, and, with a sort of reproachful look on his ugly but honest face, the bulldog stretched out on a rug, as much as to say:

"Don't be any longer than you can help, Dick."

Dick could hear the voices of his father and uncle in the big, handsome library, where our hero had spent many pleasant hours with his favorite books. Mr. Larabee was speaking.

"I tell you what it is, Mortimer," he remarked to his brother-in-law. "It's all a sinful waste of money, and the sooner you find it out the better. Why it's the most crazy idea of any that my sister ever got into her head! Don't let Dick do it!"

"They're talking about me," thought the young millionaire, and he hardly knew whether to go in,

or wait for another time. But, before he could move away from the door, he heard his father's voice.

"Well, Ezra, I don't agree with you, but that's not strange, since I seldom do."

"It would be a lot better if you did," snarled Uncle Ezra.

"There are two opinions about that. At any rate, I shall carry out the wishes of my wife. She wished Dick to be brought up in a certain way, and I shall do my best to fulfil her plans. She would have done it herself had she lived. So Dick shall make the experiment. I know it will do him good. He needs change after a hard winter in school."

"But, Mortimer, think of the cost! It's going to be awful!" and there was agony in the crabbed old man's voice.

"Oh, it won't cost such a pile, Ezra. Besides, Dick can afford it, and if he can't I can. The money couldn't be put to better use."

"Yes it could, Mortimer. There's where you're mistaken. It could be invested in tenement houses, and made to pay big interest. You could——"

"I'll never build tenements with any of my money, nor with Dick's, either!" interrupted Mr. Hamilton. "I don't want to make a profit out of the poor."

"Then invest it in stocks or bonds," went on Mr. Larabee, eagerly. "They pay well."

"I have enough investments as it is, and so has

Dick," answered the millionaire. "No, Ezra, I have made up my mind. Dick shall have a chance to see the world—or, at least, part of it. As soon as he comes home I'll tell him of his mother's plan——"

Dick thought it time to make his presence known. He rattled the knob of the library door, and heard a start of surprise from within. Then he entered.

"Hello, dad!" he exclaimed, fairly rushing up to Mr. Hamilton, and clasping his two hands in an eager grip. "How are you, Uncle Ezra?"

"Why, Dick, my boy!" cried the rich man, heartily, "I didn't expect you so soon. Oh, but I *am* glad to see you! It's like old times to have you back! Where's Grit?" And he clapped his son on the back more like some fellow-cadet than a father.

"I—I left Grit outside, dad."

"Have you got that miserable dog yet?" demanded Uncle Ezra, giving Dick one finger to shake, and that rather grudgingly.

"Grit is outside, Uncle. I knew you didn't like him, and——"

"Like him? I should say not! Why that critter eats as much as a horse, and doesn't do a stroke of work to pay for his keep."

"Well, Dick, how are you?" asked his father, holding him off at arm's length, to get a better view. "My, but you've grown, though you're a little pale."

"Yes, there wasn't much chance to tan up in the winter. But I'm glad to get home. How's everybody? You're looking well yourself, dad. Oh, Uncle Ezra," spoke Dick quickly, as he thought of something, "how's Aunt Samanthy?"

"Oh, she ain't as well as she might be. She has something the matter with her stomach, and the medicine she has to take is very expensive—very! Besides, she's had the doctor real frequent of late, and that runs up an expense; not that I mind it so much, but it seems doctors charge more than they used to. No, your Aunt Samanthy ain't as well as she might be."

"I'm sorry to hear that," murmured Dick, as sympathetically as he could.

"Everything go off well at school?" asked Mr. Hamilton.

"Yes, dad; and my company took first prize."

"Good! Glad to hear it."

"I treated the boys to a good feed on the strength of it, too, last night."

"That's right."

"Did it cost much?" asked Uncle Ezra, putting his hand into his pocket, doubtless to see if his purse were safe.

"Oh, not so very much; but it was worth all it cost."

"A sinful waste of money!" murmured the crabbed old man. "You could have given them coffee and sandwiches, just as well as an elaborate supper, Richard."

"Well, we're glad to have you back, Dick," went on Mr. Hamilton, hoping to change the subject. "Didn't expect you until this evening. We were just talking about you—your uncle and I."

"Yes—I—er—I overheard some of it," said Dick.

"Then I hope you'll profit by it!" exclaimed Uncle Ezra, quickly. "For of all the foolish, nonsensical, wasteful, extravagant ideas, the one your father has got into his head now is the worst I ever heard."

Dick looked questioningly at his parent.

"Your Uncle Ezra doesn't agree with what I am going to propose, Dick," said the millionaire with a laugh, "but I hope you will. I did not intend telling you this until to-morrow, but it will do no harm to mention it now.

"Dick, your mother, as you know, had very advanced ideas as to what a young man with considerable wealth ought to do with it. Some of her plans for you have already been carried out. There are others which are mere suggestions, communicated to me before she—before she left us," and Mr. Hamilton spoke softly, while Dick felt a lump come into his own throat.

"Dick, my boy, your mother wanted to have you see the world, when you got old enough to appreciate the beauties of it, and I think you are at about the right age to begin now. She suggested to me that, when I thought it wise, I

should let you have a well-equipped steam yacht, and cruise about during an entire summer."

"A steam yacht, dad!" cried the youth, his eyes sparkling.

"That's it, Dick. How do you like the idea?"

"Like it? Why, dad, it's immense! Great! Fine! When can I have it, and where can I go?"

"You may have it as soon as you like, and go where you please—that is, except to cross the ocean. I hardly think I'd like to have you venture as far as that on your first voyage. Otherwise you're unrestricted; though I have a suggestion to make later."

"Oh, dad! Do you really mean it? A steam yacht all for myself?"

"Certainly, and you can take along as many of your friends as you please. Perhaps Uncle Ezra would like to go."

"Who, me? Are you crazy, Mortimer? I wouldn't go in one for a thousand dollars, and besides, I can't spare the time from my business and farm. My hired man would be sure to burn the barn down, and I'd lose more money than I could make in a year. No sea voyages for me!"

"Am I going to have a yacht made to order?" asked Dick. "Because if I am, it will take so long that I can't get started this summer."

"That's right," agreed Mr. Hamilton. "So you had better look around for a good boat that has been slightly used. I think you can find one in

New York. There, the news is out, Dick, and I hope you are pleased."

"Pleased? I can't begin to thank you! I wonder where I shall go?"

"I may have something to suggest on that score later," went on Mr. Hamilton. "Just now, suppose we have a little lunch. Come, Ezra."

"Not for me, Mortimer!" exclaimed Mr. Larabee. "It's bad for the digestion to eat between meals, and besides, it's a wasteful habit. But, Nephew Richard, I want to protest against this idea of you buying a steam yacht, and squandering money on travel. There is no sense in it! You had much better put the money out at interest. I can sell you some shares in a woolen mill I own, and you could spend your summer vacation in the factory, learning a useful trade."

"No, thank you, Uncle Ezra, I think I'll do as my mother wished me to, and travel," said Dick.

"Oh, the wastefulness of this rising generation!" murmured the old man. "It is terrible! Terrible!"

Dick and his father turned to leave the library.

"A steam yacht! A steam yacht all for myself and friends! It's too good to be true!" cried Dick enthusiastically, as he linked his arm in his father's. "Can't you come along, dad?"

"I'm afraid not. But now let's discuss some details. You haven't any too much time. Come along, Ezra, and have a cup of coffee, anyhow."

Mr. Ezra Larabee declined and lingered behind

as his nephew and brother-in-law left the handsome room.

"A steam yacht," murmured the old man. "A sinful waste of money! It's time I took a hand in this! Mortimer Hamilton is crazy to let his son do this. It will be the ruination of the boy. I—I must stop this waste of money in some way, even if I have to prevent him—but no, I mustn't even whisper it. But I have a plan—I have a plan! Perhaps, after all, I can keep Richard from becoming a spendthrift. That would be terrible! I must try! I must try!" and, rubbing his gnarled hands together, the old man sat down in an easy chair. There was a look of cunning and craftiness on Mr. Larabee's face, and, as he thought of something, a smile spread itself over his wrinkled features, and the little tuft of white whiskers on his chin moved up and down as he mumbled to himself:

"I must prevent it! I must prevent it! I can think of some scheme. The Hamilton fortune shan't be squandered if I can help it, for it will come to me and my wife when they—when they are both gone, and I'm going to live a good while yet—a good while," and Uncle Ezra rubbed his dry hands together, and chuckled in a mirthless fashion.

Meanwhile Dick and his father talking over the scheme of purchasing a steam yacht, were all unconscious of the plot that Mr. Larabee was planning against them.

CHAPTER IV

UNCLE EZRA'S PLOT

"THIS isn't to be altogether a pleasure trip, Dick," went on Mr. Hamilton, when he and his son were alone in the reception hall. "I suppose you got my letter, telling you about some distant relatives I need to locate?"

"Yes, I got your note, but you didn't go into details."

"No, it wasn't exactly safe, in a letter. I'll tell you about it now, and I hope you can combine business and pleasure. How would you like to sail for Cuba?"

"Cuba? Fine! That would suit me."

"Well, I'd like to have you make a trip down there, and, after you find the persons I'm looking for, you can cruise somewhere else; along the New England coast, if you like."

"All right, dad. Let's hear the story."

"I think I never told you," began Mr. Hamilton, "that your mother had some distant relatives in Cuba. One of her cousins named Rose Martin married a Cuban gentleman, named Raphael Val-

dez. For a time they were quite well off, but, just before your mother left us she learned that her cousin had died, and that her husband and son were in want.

"Your mother endeavored to send them some relief, but just then the Spanish-American war broke out, and all trace was lost of the Valdez family, who were of Spanish extraction. Your mother grieved very much at not being able to help her relatives, even if they were so distantly related, and I promised that I would aid her.

"Then—then came your mother's death," and Mr. Hamilton's voice faltered. "I had many cares, and the matter slipped from my mind. Now, it is to find, if possible, these people that I wish you to go to Cuba, Dick."

"In order to give them aid?"

"Yes, if they need it; but also for another reason. That reason I hinted at in my letter. It seems that, some time ago, your mother purchased a large piece of valuable property in the business section of New York. It has increased in value of late, and a syndicate has been formed to erect a large office building on it. I am interested in it—in fact, I hold a majority of the stock.

"Well, when the time came to interest outsiders, and borrow money to erect the building, for I do not care to finance it all alone, we found that there was a flaw in the deed. Your mother paid cash for the property, and she thought she had a good title, but it seems that now, when the

ownership has passed to me by will, that the names of this Senor Valdez and his son are needed on the deed."

"And you want me to locate them, and get their signatures?" asked Dick.

"Either that, or bring them to Hamilton Corners, or New York, where they can sign. I also want you to aid them if they are in want. I have had several firms of lawyers, both in New York and in Cuba, looking for the Valdez family, but no trace of them can be found. I have spent much time and money on it, for I want this matter cleared up. The whole thing is hanging fire until we can get those signatures. Outside capital will not be invested in the enterprise, for the title guarantee company will not certify to the title while this flaw exists. So you see it is very necessary to find the Valdez father and son, and I hope you can do it."

"But couldn't you erect the building on this land yourself, and finance it alone?"

"I could, but it is a sort of philanthropic enterprise. It is a stock company, and the funds of widows and orphans are tied up in it. If it goes through they will make considerable money, but if it does not they will lose. Of course, I could step in and take entire financial responsibility, but if I did this it might be said that I had put up a game, to enrich myself at the expense of the poor who invested their money because I stood back of the enterprise. It would look as though

I had invented this fact of the title not being clear, to gain some advantage."

"I see," said Dick.

"Another thing," went on his father. "Your mother left a certain sum, under her will, to Senor Valdez and his son, and they are also, it seems, entitled to a tenth part of this New York property, and I wish them to have their rights.

"So I want to find these people, get their signatures to a deed, and the title will be clear. Then the work can proceed, the building will be erected, and all will be well. It is very important, Dick, and it is growing more so every day.

"That is why this plan of your mother's to have you get a steam yacht happens at a good time. You can go to Cuba, and begin this search for me—the search in which the lawyers have failed."

"Well, dad, I'll do my best!" exclaimed the young millionaire.

"And it will be just as well if your Uncle Ezra doesn't knew that you are going to Cuba to look for your mother's relatives," went on Mr. Hamilton. "Not that it would make any particular difference, only I would prefer that the fact did not become generally known. So, ostensibly, you will be going on a mere pleasure trip, and in a sense it will be that, for you will probably take some of your friends along."

"So I will, dad. It will be great!"

"Well, now that so much is settled, we can defer talking about the rest until after supper,"

suggested Mr. Hamilton, as he and his son walked toward the dining-room.

"About how large a yacht do you think I ought to get, dad?" asked Dick, as the butler placed their chairs at the table.

"Well, suit yourself about that. Of course, you want a good, seaworthy craft, but I shouldn't get one too large. If you do you'll have to engage a big crew to help navigate it; and again, while I have no wish to restrict you in the spending of your fortune, you will find yachting pretty expensive."

"Expensive! I should say it was, Mortimer!" exclaimed Mr. Larabee, coming into the dining-room at that moment. "Don't think of letting Richard have a yacht."

"We have already discussed that," said Mr. Hamilton, somewhat coldly, "and my mind is made up. Better have something to eat, Ezra."

"Well, I will have a bit of dry toast and a cup of weak tea. I don't believe that will give me the dyspepsia," and the butler tried to conceal a smile as he set before the crabbed old man the very frugal repast.

Dick and his father talked yachting from the beginning until the end of the meal, and Uncle Ezra Larabee was a silent, but objecting listener. Occasionally a crafty look came over his face, to be replaced by one of agony when Dick mentioned the spending of large sums of money. At length, Mr. Hamilton said:

"Well, my boy, I think the simplest way out of it would be for you to go to New York, and look around for yourself. Perhaps you may pick up a bargain in a steam yacht. You have my full permission to do as you think best, only, as I said, don't get too large a craft. Take a week for the task, and I think you'll get what you want."

"That's what I'll do, dad. I'll go to New York in a few days, and see what I can do."

"Perhaps your Uncle Ezra would like to go with you," went on Mr. Hamilton.

"Who, me?" exclaimed the old man, carefully picking up from the table-cloth some crumbs of toast and eating them. "No, Mortimer, I haven't any money to waste on trips to New York. Living is frightfully expensive there."

"I'll pay for everything," said Dick, generously.

"No—no," and his uncle spoke slowly, and with an evident effort. "I—I—er—I've got to get back to Dankville. I know some of my hired men will waste the oats in feeding the horse, or else they'll burn too much kerosene oil, sitting up nights to read useless books. No, I must get back. The gravel walks need raking, and I always cut my lawn this time of year. I'll go home. But, before I go, I want to have a little talk with you, Mortimer, on a very serious subject."

"All right, Ezra. I guess Dick will excuse us."

Mr. Hamilton arose from the table, followed by

his brother-in-law. As Uncle Ezra pushed back his chair there was a mingled howl and growl, followed by a short bark.

"Grit!" cried Dick. "You've stepped on my bulldog, Uncle Ezra!"

"Served him right!" snapped the old man. "Dogs have no business in the house. I'd have him shot if he were mine!"

An angry retort rose to Dick's lips, but by an effort he calmed himself.

"Here, Grit, old fellow," he called soothingly, and the dog crawled up to him, limping slightly.

"Dogs are no good," went on Mr. Larabee, pointing a long, lean finger at Grit. "If he were mine I'd——"

He didn't finish the sentence, for the bulldog, with the hair on the ridge of his back standing up in anger, and with his lips parted in an ugly snarl, darted away from Dick. The animal might have sprung at Mr. Larabee, but for the restraining hand of his master on his collar. However, the crabbed old man did not wait. Toward the library he fled, crying out:

"Hold him, Richard! Hold him! If he bites me I'll sue your father for damages!"

He reached the library and slammed shut the door. Mr. Hamilton followed more slowly, endeavoring not to smile or laugh.

"Better put Grit outside, Dick," he said. "Your uncle is going home in the morning."

"All right," agreed the young millionaire, some-

what regretfully. "Come on, Grit, old man, we'll go out to the stable and see how Rex is getting along," for Dick had not greeted his pet horse since his return from the academy.

Mr. Hamilton continued on to the library, and tried the door. It was locked.

"Let me in, Ezra," he called.

"Is that savage dog gone?" inquired Mr. Larabee, with anxiety in his voice.

"Yes, Dick has taken him to the stable."

"That's where he belongs. Wait a minute and I'll open the door."

There were sounds inside, as though tables and chairs were being moved away from the portal, and then Uncle Ezra's lean face was thrust carefully out of a crack of the door, as he cautiously opened it. He took a survey up and down the hall, and, seeing no signs of Grit, swung the door wider.

"He wouldn't hurt you," said Mr. Hamilton, as he entered. "Grit is as gentle as a lamb."

"Lamb! Humph, you can't make me believe that!" snorted Mr. Larabee. "He'd have bitten me if I'd stayed there."

Mr. Hamilton did not answer, but drawing up an easy chair, and indicating another for his brother-in-law, inquired:

"What was it you wanted to see me about, Ezra?"

"It's this," went on Mr. Larabee, walking over and locking the library door. "I'm going back to

Dankville to-morrow, but, before I go, I consider it my duty to make one last appeal to you not to let Richard go off on this yachting cruise."

"Why not?"

"Because it will squander a lot of money that he ought to save up against the time of need."

"Oh, Dick has plenty, and so have I."

"That may be, but it's the wrong sort of training for a young man. Richard ought to be taught the habits of thrift and frugality."

"His mother and I think he ought to be trained to fulfill his station in life, which is that of a millionaire. Did you ever stop to think, Ezra, that a millionaire may do good by spending his money freely, not foolishly."

"No, I don't know as I ever did."

"Well, he can. Think of how many persons he keeps employed, and how he helps to give them a chance to earn their living."

"Well, Mortimer, you and I never will think alike on that subject. But will you do as I ask—not let Richard waste this money for a yacht?"

"I'm afraid I can't do as you ask, Ezra. I've promised Dick that he may have the boat, and I'm sure it will do him good."

"Humph!" exclaimed Uncle Ezra. Then his face took on a hard and determined look.

"Mortimer," he said finally, after a silence, "I don't like to interfere, but you must remember that Richard's mother was my only sister. loved her, though I did not agree with some of

her views. I'm fond of Richard, and I want to see him grow up a careful and saving man. But he never will as long as you allow him to go on in this fashion."

"I'm afraid it's too late to change our plan, Ezra."

"No, it's not too late! I'll take a hand in this myself. If you won't bring your son up in the right way, then I'll do it for you!"

The lean old man had arisen from his chair, and was excitedly pacing the room.

"Why, Ezra, what do you mean?" asked Mr. Hamilton, wondering what sudden emotion had possessed his brother-in-law.

Then Mr. Larabee seemed to recollect himself. His manner suddenly changed.

"Excuse me, Mortimer," he said more mildly. "I spoke too hastily. I—I wasn't thinking what I was saying. I—I—er—that is, I had some hopes that you might let Richard come to live with me and Samanthy at The Firs for a time. I would give him good training."

"I've no doubt you would, Ezra, but Dick doesn't want to go, and I have fallen in with his late mother's plan of having him travel and see the world. Besides, there is another important phase to it."

"Very well," spoke Mr. Larabee, and he seemed to be careful of his words. "Then we'll say no more about it, Mortimer. Now, I think I'll get ready to return to Dankville."

"Why, it's too soon. You're not going until morning, are you?"

"No, but I must get my things in order, and I have some business to attend to. I think I'll go do it now. Do you think that savage dog is out of the way?"

"Oh, yes; you needn't fear him."

Mr. Larabee cautiously unlocked the library door, and looked out. Then he stepped into the hall. The coast was clear, and he went upstairs to his room. Mr. Hamilton remained in the library.

As Dick's uncle reached the head of the stairs, he turned and looked toward the room where his brother-in-law was sitting.

"So you won't agree to my plan, to save your son from being a spendthrift, eh?" he murmured. "Then, I'll do it for you in spite of you and him! I'll prevent Richard from wasting all of his money, if I have to lock him up away from you, and where you can't see him."

After supper that night, or, rather, following dinner, as Gibbs, the butler, preferred to call it, Dick saddled Rex, his horse, and galloped over to town in the pleasant late June evening. As he was turning into the main street he saw a wagon coming toward him, drawn by a sleek, fat horse, and driven by a genial-faced lad of about our hero's age.

"Hello, Henry!" called the young millionaire, pleasantly, drawing rein. "Got a new horse, I

see. How's the old iron business? Rattling away, I suppose?"

"That's right," answered Henry Darby, with a laugh. "But this isn't a new horse, Dick."

"No? You don't mean to say that it's the one you used to have—the same one that couldn't draw the load of iron when I once met you?"

"The same one. I bought him from the man who sold me the iron, and I fattened him up. The horse got rid of the ringbone, spavin, blind staggers, dinkbots, and a few other things he had, and he's all right now."

"You must have fed him on some iron filings to make him so strong," for the animal was pulling a heavy load.

"No, I didn't do that, but maybe he got out of the stable and helped himself to an old radiator or a wagon tire once in a while. So you're back from the military school, Dick?"

"Yes, and glad of it in a way. I'm going to have a steam yacht, and travel around a bit this vacation."

"My, oh my! Some folks are born lucky!" cried Henry, with a jolly laugh. "Now, if I'd only been rich instead of good looking I'd buy a yacht, too," and the two lads, both of whom were really fine-appearing chaps, laughed together.

"I'll give you a ride when you get your vacation," promised Dick.

"The trouble is I never get one," replied Henry. "The old iron business, that you helped me start

on such a good footing, takes all my time. Well, I must be traveling, Dick. This horse hasn't had his supper, yet, and he needs it. So long."

"So long, Henry. Come over and see me when you get a chance."

"Humph! There aren't many millionaires who would give a fellow like me such an invitation as that," remarked Henry Darby as he drove along, while Dick galloped off in the opposite direction.

Dick met several of his friends in town, and spent a pleasant hour chatting with them, before he trotted leisurely back home. He found his father reading in the library, but Uncle Ezra had gone to bed early, as he said he must take the first train for home in the morning. Mr. Hamilton did not tell his son of the peculiar words and actions of his uncle.

"Well, Dick," said Mr. Hamilton, musingly, "I suppose you'll soon be going to New York, to buy your yacht."

"Day after to-morrow, dad."

"All right. I'll give you a letter to my lawyers there, and they'll see to the transfer of the boat, and attend to the legal matters. Now, don't buy any gilt-edged mining shares, Dick," and Mr. Hamilton smiled grimly, in memory of a visit his son once paid to the metropolis, as related in the first volume of this series.

"I'll not," promised the young millionaire, and, after he and his father had spent an hour chatting in the big apartment, the walls of which were lined

with many books, Dick retired to bed, Mr. Hamilton soon following.

Dick's room was over an extension to the main part of the house, and was fitted up like the "den" of any other lad, whether he has a million dollars to his credit, or only one. There were various trophies, some swords and guns, Indian relics, odds and ends of no earthly use to any one but a boy, and a few pictures. Yet, everything in it meant something to Dick, and, after all, that is the real way to decorate a "den."

Mr. Larabee, the next day, completed his preparations for returning to The Firs, and Dick began to pack for his trip to New York. He offered to drive his uncle to the railroad station in his auto runabout, but Mr. Larabee did not trust autos.

"Besides," he added, "you might run over somebody, and then they'd bring a suit for damages, and I'd be liable for part of it, on account of being in the car with you. No, I'll walk and save the street-car fare."

"I'll take all responsibility for the damage," promised Dick, but his uncle would not agree to an auto trip, and walked.

As Mr. Larabee said good-by to his brother-in-law and nephew, he murmured to himself:

"I certainly must put my plan into operation. That boy Richard has absolutely no idea of the value of money. I must save him from himself and his father. I certainly must."

Uncle Ezra was very thoughtful on his way home that day. Riding in the train he worked out the details of a plot that was destined to have a very important effect on Dick's life.

"It's a little risky," thought Mr. Larabee, as the train neared Dankville station, "and it's going to cost me considerable, but I can get it back from the Hamilton fortune in the end, and I can charge interest on whatever I spend. It's in a good cause, and I'll do it, for I must teach Richard the value of a dollar!"

Mr. Larabee reached home, and was welcomed by his wife, who carefully watched him to see that he wiped his feet as he entered the house. He told of his visit to his brother-in-law's house, and denounced Mr. Hamilton's action in letting Dick have a steam yacht. Then, after a frugal meal, the lights were put out, to save kerosene oil, and the gloomy house of The Firs was shrouded in darkness.

But, somehow, Uncle Ezra Larabee couldn't sleep. He tossed from side to side in the bed, and, now and then, he muttered to himself:

"I'll do it! I vum I'll do it! It's the only way."

His wife noted his restlessness.

"What's the matter, Ezra?" she asked. "Can't you sleep? Are you sick?"

"Nope. I'm all right."

But Mr. Larabee wasn't. Sleep would not come to him. He was busy thinking of many things,

but chief of all was a plan he had evolved to save Dick Hamilton from what the old man thought was a trip that would "waste" much money.

"I've got to do it," murmured Uncle Ezra to the darkness all about him. "It may not be accordin' to strict law, but it's justice. I've got to do it," and he turned wearily from one side of the bed to the other as he worked out the details of his plot.

"For land sakes!" exclaimed his wife at length, for she was being kept awake, "can't you doze off, Ezra?"

"No, I can't seem to, Samanthy."

"Maybe your railroad trip upsot ye?"

"No, I guess not. I think I'll sleep now. I've had lots to think of, Samanthy."

Once more he shifted his position and tried to close his eyes, but they would not stay shut. He found himself staring up at the ceiling in the darkness.

He arose, got a drink of water, and came back to bed. But he seemed more wideawake than ever.

"Ezra," called his wife again, "are you thinkin' of the dollar an' nineteen cents you once lost? Maybe that's what's keepin' you awake."

"No, it ain't that, Samanthy."

"Then, what is it?"

"I can't tell you."

"Why, Ezra. You ain't in trouble; be ye? You ain't goin' to keep a secret from me; be ye?"

"I ain't in trouble, no, Samanthy, but I've got to keep this thing quiet until—well, until I'm ready to tell it."

"But what's it about, Ezra?"

"Well, it's about Nephew Richard and his money. He'll run through his mother's fortune in no time, if I don't take a hand and save it."

"Do tell, Ezra! What are you goin' to do?"

"Samanthy, I'm going to do something desperate! I've got to do it to save Dick. Why, his father's as crazy as he is about spending money. I've got to do something desperate."

"You—you won't get arrested for it; will you, Ezra?"

"I hope not. But go to sleep, Samanthy. I'll tell you about it—when it's time," and, having thus gotten this much of the plot off his mind, Uncle Ezra turned over and went to sleep. But he did not have pleasant dreams.

CHAPTER V

DICK IS SHADOWED

BEARING a letter to his father's attorneys in New York, Messrs. Blake & Carrington, Dick started for the metropolis the second day after his uncle's visit.

"Now use your own judgment about getting your yacht," said the millionaire to his son, "but, of course, be guided by the lawyers. Buying a steam craft is rather a large operation, especially if you don't know much about it."

Highly elated at the prospect of the good times before him, Dick sat in the parlor car of the fast express, as he was whirled toward the big city, and made plan after plan.

"I'll get a lot of the fellows, some from the academy and some from town, and we'll have a glorious time yachting," he told himself. "We'll go up the New England coast, and down to Florida and maybe even to Bermuda and to Cuba, and —by Jove I've a good notion to try to double Cape Horn! That would be something to talk about when I got back."

It did not seem to occur to Dick that he was

laying out sufficient travel for several vacations, all in one. But it's lots of fun to make plans, especially when you have the money to carry them out—and sometimes even when you haven't.

Dick reached Manhattan after a day and night of travel, registered at a hotel that his father frequently stopped at when in New York, and was shown to a suite of rooms that suited his ideas of luxury. They were not too elaborate, consisting of a bedroom, sitting-room and bath, but they were tastefully furnished. After a dinner, at which he ordered as the chief dish lobster, principally because he seldom could get it fresh at home, he went to a theatre.

"I'll see the lawyers the first thing in the morning," thought Dick, "and then the sooner I can buy that yacht the better. I'm anxious to get out to sea."

Mr. Blake, the senior partner of the firm, received the young millionaire cordially next morning.

"Your father wrote to me some time ago," he said, "stating that you might come on to select a steam craft, and so I have been on the lookout for one for you. I have several in view, and if you wish we'll go and take a look at them."

"Nothing would suit me better," announced Dick, eagerly.

Piloted by the attorney, Dick was taken to the anchorage of the New York Yacht Club.

There were several trim craft there, which

could be purchased, and Dick was shown over them by the persons in charge. One was a rakish-looking, clipper-built boat, constructed more for speed than for comfort. It was a beautiful craft, but Dick decided he did not care for swift sailing, and would rather have more room.

Another yacht, the *Isabelle* seemed to him, at first, to be just right. She had new engines and boilers, and was magnificently fitted up. But the price was very high, and, while Dick could have afforded it, Mr. Blake pointed out that the yacht would require a crew of about twenty-five men, and Dick did not think he cared to preside, as captain *pro tem,* over such a force.

"I want something smaller, I think," he said.

"That's my own opinion," remarked Mr. Blake.

They had exhausted the possibilities at the Yacht Club anchorage, so the lawyer proposed a trip to St. George, Staten Island, off which several yachts, that their owners wished to dispose of, were anchored. There Dick found three which would have suited him, but Mr. Blake advised him not to commit himself, but to look further before deciding.

"We'll go over to Brooklyn," proposed the lawyer. "We may as well put in the entire day, for buying a steam yacht is not to be disposed of too lightly."

As they were taken out in a small motorboat, past several yachts at anchor, they passed one, over the rail of which an old, grizzled man was

leaning, calmly smoking a short, black pipe. He was a veritable picture of an "old sea dog," and Dick's eyes danced with pleasure at the sight of him. A moment later his gaze wandered to the yacht herself. He could not repress a murmur of admiration.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Blake.

"That yacht," replied the young millionaire. "That's exactly my idea of what I want. I wonder if we can buy her?"

"I don't know, but it's easy to find out."

The lawyer directed the engineer of the motor-boat to put them alongside. As Dick approached nearer his admiration grew, until he had made up his mind that if the interior suited him as well as did the outside that boat would be his.

He saw the name on her stern as they approached—*Albatross*—and even that pleased him. The yacht was a trim craft, narrow enough in beam to indicate speed, with a high bow to take a heavy sea well, and long enough to afford plenty of room, while her breadth was not such as to make her too much of a roller, or wallower, in the trough of the sea.

Two slender masts, for auxiliary sails, and for signal flags, with the conductors of a wireless apparatus strung between them, rose fore and aft of a buff-colored funnel, rakishly set. In short, the yacht was a beauty.

"On board the *Albatross!*" called Mr. Blake, when they were within hailing distance.

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the old sea dog, pulling at his cap.

"I understand that yacht is for sale," went on the lawyer, for, on consulting a list he had, he saw that she was among those he had put down to examine.

"She might be, if any one had the money," replied the old sailor, stuffing his thumb into the bowl of his pipe, to tamp down the tobacco.

"Well, I have the money," spoke Dick, quickly.

"Then come aboard, if you please, sir," was the more genial reply, and the old man walked forward to where an accommodation ladder was suspended, and lowered it.

The young millionaire observed that the old sailor walked with a limp, and he at once made up his mind that he had a wooden leg. This diagnosis was confirmed when Dick and Mr. Blake stepped on deck a few seconds later.

"Well, here's the *Albatross,* and she's for sale, more's the pity," went on the old man, respectfully. "Many's the voyage I've sailed in her when Mr. Richardson was alive. But he's dead, and the pretty craft's on the market. I'm stayin' here to look after her, and d'ye know," and his voice sank to a whisper, "I've had half a notion, more'n once, to hist the anchor, make sail, an' start for Davy Jones' locker, me an' her together. For I've been on her for so long that she's like a wife to me."

"Then she is an old boat?" asked Mr. Blake, apprehensively.

"Old enough to know how to weather many a storm that some of the new-fangled craft wouldn't dare venture out in. The only thing I have agin' her is that she's a steamer instead of a sailer, but with her engines stopped she can pick up a bone in her teeth when all her canvas is spread," added the old man, proudly. "She has new engines and boilers, and she's fit to make a trip around the world starting to-morrow; and I wish she was!"

"Maybe she will!" cried Dick, enthusiastically. "I think I'll take her, Mr. Blake. The *Albatross* is just what I want."

"Wait until you go below," suggested the lawyer with a smile. "Will you show us down, Mr. —er—Mr.—?" he paused significantly.

"Widkin is my name—Ebenezer Widkin," answered the old sailor, with a touch of his cap. "An' you can take your choice by callin' me Ebby or Widdy. Most of 'em calls me Widdy," he added with a grin, "in consequence of me never havin' married."

"Well, then, Widdy, take us below," suggested Mr. Blake, and soon he and Dick were exploring the interior of the craft. If the exterior, with its snow-white decks and mahogany rails, its ample companionways and other details had captivated Dick, the cabins, engine room, dining saloon and galley completed the conquest.

"I'll take her!" he said enthusiastically to Mr.

Blake. "She's just big enough, and not too big. The engines are new, and she's fitted up just as I want." Dick stood in the owner's cabin, the most elaborate one on the yacht.

"Well, it's up to you, as the boys say," remarked the lawyer. "Of course, there are many details to be looked after, but if you are satisfied, we won't seek further. I'll see the owner's representatives, and negotiate with them."

"Is there—if I might be so bold as to ask, sir," began Widdy, as he shall be called, "is there a chance of the yacht being put into commission, sir?"

"Every chance!" cried Dick, with sparkling eyes. "Every chance, Widdy."

"An' would you—that is, do you think you could find room for such a worn-out old sea dog as me on board? I'm a A1 sailor, sir, even if I have a wooden leg, an' I can do my share with the best of 'em, if I do say it myself."

"I think I'd be very glad to have you as a member of the crew," answered Dick, for he had taken a liking to the old man.

"Thank you, sir, for sayin' that. Many's the day I've sat here, smokin' my pipe lonesome-like, wishin' some millionaire would come along and buy her. Why, would you believe it," and his voice sank to a whisper, "I've even been thinkin' of turnin' pirate myself, an' pickin' up a crew of my old mates to navigate her, I've been that desperate for action, sir."

"Well, if everything goes right, you'll soon have plenty of action," promised the young millionaire. "I intend to take a long voyage, and nothing would suit me better than to go in the *Albatross.*"

"And you couldn't find a better craft to sail in, if you was to search the world over!" cried Widdy. "There! I've said it, and dash my lee scuppers! I'll stand by it in fair weather or foul! I've got a prospect of action at last, an' I'm a bit excited-like, but you must excuse me."

Then, with a sudden motion, he took his short, black clay pipe from his mouth, dashed it to the deck, where it broke into a score of pieces. Then, drawing a new clay from his pocket, and breaking off the stem short, he proceeded to fill it with tobacco, and light it. Next he stumped off after a deck swab, with which he proceeded to clean up the fragments of pipe and ashes.

"I'm a bit excited at times," he went on more calmly, "but I don't mean nothin' by it. I'll smoke a new pipe to the new owner," he added. "How soon can we sail?" he whispered hoarsely, with his hand to his mouth, as though much depended on the secrecy of the answer.

"It will be hard to say, at present," answered Mr. Blake for Dick, "but, if all goes well, probably within a couple of weeks."

"Then, splice my mizzen-shrouds but you'll find me ready an' waitin'!" cried Widdy. "Ready an' waitin'!"

"Very well," said Dick, with a jolly laugh. "And I hope we'll have many voyages together."

"By Neptune's whiskers, sir, so do I!" retorted Widdy, and he blew out a great cloud of smoke.

Mr. Blake and his youthful client returned to shore in the motor craft, and the lawyer promised to at once start negotiations looking to the purchase of the yacht. As a measure of precaution, however, he insisted that a competent expert be hired to examine the hull, engines and boilers, and, though this meant a little delay, Dick felt obliged to consent to it.

There was nothing more to be done that day, and, after having sent a telegram to his father, describing the *Albatross* in brief, and stating that he had made up his mind to purchase her, Dick went back to his hotel.

As he was turning down a quiet street leading to it, he became aware that two men were regarding him rather closely. They were coming from the opposite direction, and as they passed him they gave Dick sharp glances.

"Humph! They'll know me again, at any rate," thought the lad. Then he dismissed the incident from his mind. He was used to a certain sort of publicity and attention, for, on a previous visit to New York, his trip had been made much of by the sensational papers, and he had been credited with doing many eccentric things of which he never even dreamed. His picture had been frequently published, and he was more or less stared

at. He thought this was but a reflection of that episode.

Being fond of theatres, Dick decided to go to another play that evening. He called up Mr. Blake, asking him to accompany him, but the lawyer had another engagement, so Dick started off alone.

He thoroughly enjoyed the performance, and as he came out to get into a taxicab, to return to his hotel, he noticed that two men, who were standing near the vehicle which he had summoned, were looking at him rather more closely than at other persons in the street.

Dick glanced at them. As he did so one of the men made a remark to the other, and both turned quickly to one side, but not before the youth had had a chance to look at their faces.

"Why, they're the same fellows I met this afternoon, near the hotel," he said to himself. "They must think I'm quite a curiosity."

He entered the taxicab, and was rapidly whirled toward his stopping place. His mind was filled with thoughts of his steam yacht, and with chance adventures that might happen on the cruise. Possibly, if he had seen the actions of the two men, immediately after his departure, he would have not felt so easy.

For the twain, no sooner had Dick entered his vehicle, summoned another.

"Follow that car," directed the taller of the

pair. "Don't let it get away from you, and there's a fiver in it."

"You're rather free with the old man's money, ain't you, Sam?" asked the short man, with a laugh.

"Might as well be. He's so close-fisted that it'll do him good to be bled a bit. But hit it up, sport," this to the chauffeur of the taxicab they were in. "I don't want to lose our young friend."

"All right," was the answer, and after Dick's vehicle sped the other, containing the two men who were shadowing him.

CHAPTER VI

DICK ENTERS THE TRAP

THE young millionaire was hungry, after the three hours spent in the theatre, and, knowing of a restaurant famed for its late suppers, Dick determined to go there, partly to see some of the gayer side of life in New York at midnight, and partly to satisfy his appetite. Accordingly he gave directions to the chauffeur, who, after speeding the machine down Broadway, turned into Twenty-third Street.

As the vehicle swung around the corner a lad, who was crossing the thoroughfare, had to jump nimbly to get out of the way. He reached the curb, and standing there shook his first at the occupants of the taxicab—Dick and the driver.

"What's the matter?" cried the lad who had so nearly escaped being run down. "Ain't the street big enough for you? Or do you want to chase folks up on the sidewalk?"

"Aw, beat it!" retorted the chauffeur, with all the contempt some automobilists feel for pedestrians. He had slowed up at the turn, but was about to turn on more power.

"Wait! Hold on a minute!" cried Dick, leaning forward at the sound of the other lad's voice, and a sight of his face in the gleam of an electric lamp. "How are you, Tim Muldoon?"

For a moment the other stared at the well-dressed youth in the taxicab, for the vehicle had come to a stop. Then over the features came a look of glad surprise.

"Why, if it isn't Mr. Hamilton!" cried the lad in the street. "Who'd ever think to see you here? How are you, Mr. Hamilton?"

"Make it Dick, if you don't mind, Tim," suggested the millionaire's son. "I'm Dick and you're Tim," and the wealthy lad reached out and shook hands with the lad, whom he had once befriended as a "fresh-air kid," and who, later, he had set up in the newspaper business. Tim Muldoon, a typical New York newsboy, had accompanied Dick on a trip out west, to inspect a gold mine, and had been instrumental in aiding him. Our hero had not seen his protégé in some time, though he knew him at once when the auto so nearly ran him down.

"Well, well, Tim," went on Dick. "What have you been doing with yourself since last we met? You've have grown considerable. Is the paper business good?"

"Fine, thanks to the start you gave me, Mr. Ham—I mean Dick. I'm running three stands now, and I have two assistants. I get time to go

to night school, now, and I'm studying book-keeping."

Dick had noticed that Tim spoke better language than formerly, for the use of "dis," "dat," "youse" and kindred expressions was almost entirely eliminated from his conversation.

"Where are you going now, Tim?" asked Dick, when they had exchanged some remarks.

"Home. I've just finished work. Have to get ready for the early morning papers soon, though, so I'm bound for home."

"No, you're not!" exclaimed the rich youth. "You're coming to have something to eat with me. It's lonesome dining alone. Come on, hop in and we'll be there in no time. Then I'll run you up home in this buzz-wagon."

"But, Dick, I haven't any decent clothes on. I've been working and——"

"Nonsense! What do I care about clothes? Get in. We'll hire a private room if you're so afraid some one will see you."

"It isn't that, only you——"

"Don't you worry about me; get in."

Tim complied, rather diffidently, and the much-wondering chauffeur started the car again. As it swent along there was another closely following it, and, as the vehicle containing Dick and Tim made various turns and twists through the different streets, to reach the restaurant, the other taxicab did the same. Finally Tim, whose life in New York had made him quick-witted along cer-

tain lines, leaned out of the open cab, looked back and said:

"Any of your friends in that machine, Dick?"

"Friends? No. Why?"

"Because it's sticking to us like court-plaster. Say, sport," and Tim leaned forward to the chauffeur, "are you wise to de—I mean *the* fact that we're being chased?"

"Hadn't noticed it," replied the driver, shortly.

"Well, we are. Is it a fly-cop; or has your license expired?"

"Search me," was the characteristic reply of the chauffeur. "But we'll give 'em a run for their money," and increasing speed, he turned first down one street and up another until, after five minutes' run, the other cab was not in sight.

"We either lost 'em, or else they got wise and dropped back," was Tim's opinion. "But who were they, Dick?"

"I can't imagine, unless they are some cranks who like to look at a chap because he has a little money. Maybe they're fellows who hope to work me for some game like Colonel Dendon did, when he tried to sell me fake mining shares. I've noticed a couple of men who kept rather close watch on me once or twice to-day, but I guess we've lost track of them. Well, here we are; come in and have a good meal."

Dick paid, and dismissed the chauffeur, for other taxicabs could be summoned at the restaurant. As the young millionaire and Tim entered

the place another machine came to a stop near the curb, a short distance away.

"Thought they'd fool us, didn't they, Sam?" asked one of the two men who alighted from it.

"They sure did, but it isn't so easy to lose us. We're right after him."

"You're not going to attempt anything to-night, are you?"

"No, I just want to get the lay of things. I think we can work the racket better from a boat-end, as he'll fall easier for that; so we'll wait a couple of days. We've got lots of time, and the graft is too good to shorten up," after which rather enigmatical words, the two men sauntered past the restaurant, inside of which Dick and Tim could be seen seated at a table.

The two friends—friends in spite of the differences in their stations—had a jolly time over their meal, Dick telling Tim something about the proposed yachting trip, and the newsboy, in turn, relating some of his experiences in the great city. True to his promise, Dick insisted on taking Tim home in another auto, which he summoned, and then, rather later than he was in the habit of turning in, the young millionaire sought his hotel well satisfied with his evening's pleasure.

"Well, he's safe for to-night, anyhow," remarked one of two men, as they saw Dick pass through the hotel lobby. "Now we can get some sleep." They had resumed their shadowing from the restaurant.

"Yes, and we'll try the game to-morrow, or next day," responded the other.

Dick's first visit after breakfast was to the office of Mr. Blake, the lawyer. The attorney was not in, but a clerk informed the young millionaire that matters concerning the purchase of the *Albatross* were proceeding satisfactorily. It would take several days, Dick was told.

"Well, the best thing I can do is to amuse myself," he remarked, as he left the lawyer's office. He strolled back to the hotel, intending to take a bath, and don a new suit he had just received from the tailor. As he went up to the desk to get the key of his room, the clerk handed him a letter, with the remark:

"Messenger left that for you a little while ago, Mr. Hamilton."

Dick read it hastily. It said:

"DEAR MR. HAMILTON: I am trying to hurry along matters concerned with the purchase of your yacht. I have seen the present owners, but there appears to be a slight hitch, to use a nautical term. I have another vessel in view, in case we can not get the one you want. I expect to be aboard her this morning. Could you meet me on her? She is the *Princess,* and is anchored off One Hundred and Eightieth Street. Suppose you run up there? You will find a launch at the dock to bring you out. I think, in case we can not se-

cure the *Albatross*, that you will like this vessel fully as well. Come if you can.

"Yours sincerely,

"JAMES BLAKE."

"Can't get the *Albatross!*" thought Dick, in dismay. "That will be too bad! I'll never care for any other yacht as I did for her. But I suppose I'd better go and see Mr. Blake. Queer, though, that they didn't tell me in the office how things were. Maybe they didn't know, or this may have cropped up after I left. I'll go and see the other boat, anyhow."

Dick started for the anchorage of the *Princess*, and, as he was about to engage a taxicab, he bethought himself of the old sailor on the *Albatross*.

"Widdy would be just the one to take along," reasoned Dick. "He knows all about yachts—more than either Mr. Blake or myself. I've a good notion to go get him, and see what he has to say. Even if we do have to take a different craft from the *Albatross*, I'd like Widdy to sail with me. I'll go get him."

The old sailor, who knew nothing of the hitch in the arrangements to sell the yacht he was on, was a bit surprised at Dick's proposition, but readily agreed to accompany him. He left one of his on-shore acquaintances in charge of the *Albatross*.

"But as fer findin' as good a boat as that," said Widdy, waving his hand toward her, as he and

Dick were speeding shoreward in a motor launch, "you can't do it. Split my lee scuppers if you can!"

And Dick, with a sigh, agreed with him. His heart was set on the *Albatross*.

At the foot of One Hundred and Eightieth Street Dick and the old sea dog found a small motorboat in waiting.

"Is this the launch of the *Princess?*" asked Dick of the man in charge.

"No, it's a public launch, but I can take you out to her in it. There's the yacht, out there. A gentleman on board told me he was expecting a visitor, and I said I'd wait around and bring him out. Are you the one?"

"I expect so," answered the young millionaire, and his eyes were taking in the details of the yacht *Princess*. He did not like her, at first view. She was too small, and there was none of that trimness about her which marked the *Albatross*.

"That's nothing but a dinghy with an engine in her," was the contemptuous remark of Widdy, as he relighted his short pipe, which was assuming a black hue, like unto the one he had smashed on deck.

"Well, we'll go aboard," decided Dick. "I want to hear what Mr. Blake has to say."

A few minutes later he and the old salt were ascending the accommodation ladder of the *Princess*. They were met by a sailor in uniform.

"You'll find him below," he said to Dick, with-

out being asked any questions, and he motioned to an after companionway. Dick started down. Had he but known it the young millionaire was entering the trap set for him.

CHAPTER VII

THE ESCAPE

Followed by Widdy, the wealthy lad groped his way along a rather dark passage. He expected every minute to be greeted by Mr. Blake, or to hear the lawyer's voice bidding him welcome. Dick was a little surprised that the attorney had not been out on deck, for the atmosphere below was anything but refreshing, indicating that the *Princess* was none too well ventilated.

"This way, if you please," spoke a voice, and Dick had a glimpse of a big man, attired in a sailor's suit, holding open a cabin door for him. The lad, suspecting nothing, was about to enter, but at that moment there came from Widdy, the old salt who was directly behind him, a snarl not unlike that of the bulldog Grit, at a sight of Uncle Ezra Larabee.

"Oh, ho! It's you, my fine swab, is it?" cried Widdy, pushing his way past Dick, and confronting the big sailor. "It's you, is it, an' up to some of your knavish tricks, I'll be bound! Let me get hold of you, Jake Shrouder, and I'll pay back some of the scores I owe you! Split my lee scup-

pers! I didn't think to find you here! I made sure you was in jail, if Davy Jones hadn't claimed you! Look out, Mr. Dick!"

"And with that Widdy, stumping forward on his wooden leg, made a dive for the husky sailor, like a man making a tackle on the football field. As for Shrouder, if that was his name, he seemed to turn pale under his bronzed skin.

"Widdy! You here!" he gasped, and leaped back, as if to shut himself in the cabin he had invited Dick to enter.

"Yes, I'm here! What thieving trick are you up to now? Is it to scuttle the ship, or shanghai somebody? Wait until I get hold of you, with a belayin' pin in the other hand, an'——"

But Shrouder gave Widdy no chance to reach him. With a muttered imprecation, he slammed the door shut in the face of the old sailor. Nothing daunted, Widdy threw himself against it, using his artificial leg as a battering ram. There was a splintering of wood, and, as the broken door flew back, Dick saw the large man running through the cabin toward another portal, which he frantically unlocked.

"What's the matter? What's up?" demanded the young millionaire, anxiously. What's wrong, Widdy?"

"Everything, Mr. Dick. Look out for yourself. There's bad business afoot here, or Jake Shrouder would never be on hand. But I'll get him!"

He stumped forward, swinging his powerful arms to and fro, as if eager to clasp his enemy in them, but he stumbled, and would have fallen inside the cabin with the broken door, had not Dick caught him. At the same time the fleeing man called out:

"The jig's up! Widdy's here!"

"Who's Widdy?" asked a man's voice, and it was followed by confused shouts.

"Never mind. The jig's up, I tell you! Better get ashore. Cast off the boat!" yelled the big sailor.

There was the tramp of rapid footsteps on deck. Then came a sound as of something being dragged along—a scraping of wood on wood.

"Quick!" cried the old sailor to Dick. "They're trying to shut the hatches on us. We must get on deck!"

Puzzled and alarmed—not knowing what to make of the strange actions of Widdy, yet vaguely fearing, the lad turned from the cabin, and hastened toward the companionway down which he had come. As he sprang up it he saw the young sailor who had told him to go below shoving the hatch cover over.

"Quit that!" cried Dick. With a quick motion he caught up a coil of rope that had dropped on the steps, and thrust this into the crack as the man pushed the cover forward. This prevented it from being closed.

A moment later Widdy was at Dick's side. The

old sailor thrust his gnarled hands into the crack, and, with a wrench, sent the companionway cover sliding back.

"Hop out!" he called to Dick. "I'll follow."

As the lad reached the deck he saw, disappearing over the side, the young sailor, and the big one whom Widdy had called Shrouder. They seemed to be descending into some boat. Dick rushed to the rail. In a small barge were two men, and it needed but a glance to disclose to the young millionaire that they were the same two who had stared at him so persistently the day before, and though Dick did not then know it, they were the same pair who had followed him in the taxicab. Shrouder and the other sailor dropped into the barge with them.

"Grab him, Mr. Dick! Grab him!" cried Widdy, as he saw his old enemy escaping, but Dick did not think it wise to attempt to hold back the desperate men. A few seconds later the four were pulling away from the *Princess* for dear life.

"Well," remarked Dick, drawing a long breath, as though he had just taken part in a desperate race, "what's this all about, Widdy?"

"About? It's about villainy, that's what it's about, Mr. Dick! Villainy, and scheming, and black tricks and underhand work and shanghai-games, and looting and scuttling ships and anything else that's bad—that's what it is," growled the old seaman, as he stumped to the side, and

shook his fist at the craft containing the four men. Then he filled his pipe, and began to smoke more calmly.

"We could chase them in the motorboat," suggested Dick, hardly yet understanding what it was all about.

"What's the use? Shrouder is as slippery as a greased sheet in a hail storm. Let him go—he won't sleep any the easier to-night from having met me. But I wish I could have laid my hooks on him," and Widdy opened and shut his gnarled hands suggestively.

"But I don't understand," said the lad. "Where is Mr. Blake? Why should those fellows disappear so suddenly? I was to meet the lawyer here, and look over this boat——"

"Mr. Blake never came here," said Widdy, bluntly. "It's a plant—a game—to get you on board. I'll wager that note sent to your hotel was forged."

"But why should they want to get me here?"

"To rob you, most likely. They know you're rich."

"Then that must have been why those two men paid such close attention to me," decided Dick.

"Of course," agreed the old sailor. "As soon as I clapped eyes on Jake Shrouder I knew there was something crooked afoot. I've known him for years—sailed all over in ships with him—and I never knew a piece of black business afoot anywhere near him that he didn't have his finger in.

I knew there was something wrong as soon as I see him, and that's why I made a jump for him, but he was too quick for me."

"But who does this yacht belong to?" asked Dick. "We seem to be all alone on it."

"I hope we are. I don't want to have anything to do with those fellows. I don't know who owns the craft. Like as not Shrouder has an interest in her. But let's get ashore, and then we'll call on Mr. Blake and let him know what's in the wind. It was all a plant, I tell you, to get you aboard, and then they'd have robbed you."

"But I don't carry much money with me," objected Dick.

"No matter. They'd have found some way to get it out of you, or your father. But, come on, let's leave this bilge-water craft. Phew! It hasn't been swabbed out in a month of Sundays."

Stumping to the opposite side of the deck Widdy signaled to the motor launch at the dock, the owner of it having agreed to come off and take Dick and the sailor whenever they waved a flag. In a few minutes the two were speeding downtown toward the lawyer's office, their questioning of the captain of the launch having resulted in nothing. He had no knowledge concerning the *Princess,* or the men on her.

As Widdy had surmised, the note purporting to come from Mr. Blake was a bald forgery, but, since Dick had never seen the attorney's writing, it was easy enough to deceive him.

"But what was their object?" asked the young millionaire.

"Robbery," decided Mr. Blake.

"But how did they know of my plans to buy a yacht?"

"Oh, easily enough. Talk travels quickly in marine circles in New York, and I fancy you are more of a public character than you imagine. At any rate, the men, whoever they are, knew something of your plans, and took advantage of them to lure you to the yacht, which they either hired for the purpose, or perhaps own. It was a clever trick, and it was lucky Widdy recognized that man in time, or you might have been locked in a cabin, and kept there until they had what they wanted out of you."

"I'm glad I took my sailor friend along," said Dick. "But how about the *Albatross?* Am I likely to get her?"

"I think so. I will have her examined in a few days, and, if she passes inspection, I will complete the purchase, and you can arrange about a captain and crew. Perhaps your old sailor can help you out there."

"That's a good idea. I'll ask him."

It was decided that little good could be accomplished by notifying the police of the attempt to work harm to Dick, and so no report was made of it, for our hero disliked the newspaper sensationalism he knew would follow. Only Mr. Blake

warned the young millionaire to be careful of where he went, and in what company he lingered.

A week passed, during which Dick enjoyed himself in New York. The steam yacht proved to be all that was claimed for her, and the purchase was completed.

"You are now the owner of the *Albatross,*" said the lawyer to Dick, one morning, handing him several papers.

"That's great! Now to get a captain, a crew, put coal and provisions aboard, and set sail."

"For what port?"

"I'm going to Cuba, partly on business and partly for pleasure. Some of my school chums are going along, and we'll have a good time. And that reminds me of something. There's a friend of mine in New York, whom I'd like to have go along with me. He's Tim Muldoon, a former newsboy."

"A newsboy?" and Mr. Blake looked surprised.

"Yes, and one of the truest characters who ever sold a paper. I must look him up. He's good fun, and will enjoy the trip."

Two days later, the legal formalities all being completed, Dick engaged the services of Captain Amos Barton, a grizzled veteran of the seas, to command the *Albatross,* and then the young millionaire returned to Hamilton Corners.

Captain Barton had agreed to select a small, but competent crew, and he would also see to putting the yacht in commission. She would be ready to

sail within a week, he stated, and all Dick would have to do would be to name the port for which he wished the graceful prow pointed.

He consulted his father on this point, and Mr. Hamilton on looking over his papers learned that the Valdez family formerly lived in Santiago or Havana, though his lawyers had been unable to get a trace of them at either place.

"But you might go to Santiago, and then to Havana," suggested Mr. Hamilton. "You'll have to do some detective work, I fancy. But look out for those men who tried to trap you."

"Oh, I'll soon be far enough away from them, dad. I'm not worrying. Besides, they won't try to board us with Widdy on guard. He's a great character!"

"So I imagine. Well, good luck to you. Do your best, and use your own judgment. You'll have to depend on yourself from now on. Have you arranged for your friends to accompany you?"

"Not completely yet, but I will soon."

CHAPTER VIII

A FIGHT IN THE DARK

THERE were many busy days for Dick, following his purchase of the *Albatross*. He received word from Captain Barton that the coaling and provisioning of the craft were proceeding satisfactorily, and that a good crew had been signed.

Dick had invited Tim Muldoon to go on the trip, and the newsboy agreed, after arranging with a younger brother to look after his business. Henry Darby also planned to accompany the young millionaire, a clerk in Mr. Hamilton's office agreeing to have an eye to the old iron business. Bricktop Norton was to drive the horse and collect scrap for Henry.

Dick invited a number of his military academy chums to make the cruise with him, but he received several letters of regret, the lads stating that vacation plans, previously made by their parents, would not permit them to accept the young millionaire's hospitality. Paul Drew was to go and Captain Innis Beeby, the cadet commander of Company C, wrote that he might meet Dick in

Savannah, Georgia, if the yacht would stop there on the way to Cuba.

"Of course, we'll stop for Beeby," said Dick to Paul Drew, who had arrived at Hamilton Corners a few days before the date set for the departure for New York.

"Yes, Beeby's good fun. We'll have a swell time on this trip, Dick."

"I hope so. I want the fellows to enjoy themselves."

Uncle Ezra paid another visit to Dick's house, though it must have cost him a pang to part with the money for a railroad ticket. He said he had come to make one more appeal to Dick's father, not to allow the youth to squander his fortune on a yacht.

"It's too late, Uncle Ezra," exclaimed Dick, gaily. "I've bought the yacht, and we shall sail in a few days."

"Well, of all the senseless, wasteful proceedings—But there, I'm done expostulating—I'm —I'm going to——"

But the churlish old man stopped short, and closed his thin lips like a steel trap. There was a dangerous, crafty look in his eyes, which boded Dick no good, but the young millionaire did not see it.

The night before the wealthy lad and his friends were to leave for the metropolis, there to go aboard the yacht, in company with Tim Muldoon, Dick found he had to go down-town to send some

telegrams, one to Captain Barton and another to the lawyer, Mr. Blake. Paul Drew, who, with Frank Bender and Henry Darby, was at Dick's house, volunteered to accompany him, but our hero said he would run down with Grit, and hurry back, leaving his friends to amuse themselves.

It was rather a dark night, with a promise of a storm, and when the wealthy lad started out he wished that he had not gotten a puncture in his auto tire that day, so that he might have used the car. But he had not had the tube repaired, and the machine was out of commission.

"But we don't mind the walk, do we, Grit?" asked the lad, and the dog whined an answer.

The messages sent, Dick started back home, hurrying along, for the first few drops of rain were falling, and indicated a heavy storm to come. The wind was blowing hard, and, after an effort to keep his umbrella right side out, Dick gave it up, furled the rain-shield, and tramped on through the drizzle, with Grit splashing at his heels.

As the young millionaire turned the corner of a dark street, before emerging into the thoroughfare that led to his house, he collided full tilt into a man who suddenly seemed to jump from behind a tree.

"I beg your——" began Dick, contritely, though it was not his fault.

The next instant, and before the youth had a chance to finish his apology, he felt himself seized

from behind by a second man, while the one who had leaped out in front of him placed his hand over his mouth. Dick felt himself being borne backward. He struggled to maintain his footing, and struck out blindly.

He felt his fists land on soft bodies, and once an exclamation of pain escaped his assailants.

"We've got him!" a voice whispered. "Where's the rig?"

Dick partly squirmed loose, and wrenched the man's hand from over his mouth.

"Take 'em, Grit!" he cried, and there was a rush of feet, while a savage growl told Dick that his faithful dog, who had lingered somewhat behind, was about to attack the footpads.

CHAPTER IX

OUT TO SEA

THE unequal fight continued, the unknown men seeking to overpower Dick, while he, on his part, made a desperate attempt to break the hold of the scoundrels who held him. He was engaged in a losing game until the arrival of his dog, when the tide of battle suddenly turned in his favor.

Grit seized a man's leg in his jaws, and bit savagely. There was a howl of pain, and the intelligent animal, well knowing that Dick had two foes to deal with, did not hold his grip. Instead, after making his teeth felt, he let go, and made a dive for the legs of the other fellow.

"Shoot the brute, Sam!" yelled the second man as he felt himself attacked by Grit. "Blow his head off! He's biting me!"

"He's bit me, too!" exclaimed the other, faintly, and he loosed his hold on Dick to make a grab for his injured leg.

"Let go, you beast!" yelled the man to whom Grit was still clinging. The man endeavored to kick the bulldog loose, but the intelligent animal

knew his business. He let go, to avoid a savage kick, and made a spring for the rascal's throat. This was too much for the footpad. He quickly thrust the young millionaire from him and staggered away, breaking into a run a moment later, and calling to his companion:

"Come on! I've had plenty!"

The other was glad enough to follow. Dick stumbled and fell, when the men released their hold, but recovered his balance after an effort. Grit, snarling and growling, started down the dark road after the men, splashing through muddy puddles.

"Here, Grit! Come back!" yelled Dick. He did not want his pet shot, and he had no doubt but that the desperate characters would use their weapons on the valuable animal.

Breathing hard from his struggle the lad darted forward. The cool rain soon revived him sufficiently, so that his strength, which had been wellnigh spent in the contest, came back to him, and he was racing with all his speed through the storm and darkness. He wanted to see who the men were—to fathom the reason for their attack on him.

"Here, Grit! Grit!" he called. "Come back!"

The dog barked a protest, for he wanted to finish the work he had begun.

"Come back, Grit!" cried Dick again, and the dog knew there was disobeying that voice. With a menacing growl he turned and leaped joyously

about his young master, now and then glancing in the direction which the men had taken, and sending a challenging bark toward them in the darkness.

"No use chasing them," murmured Dick, as he bent over to pat Grit, and felt to see if the dog had been injured. There seemed to be no cuts on him. The animal had been too quick for the men.

As for the youth he had been roughly handled, and his neck and arms were strained and bruised, while his clothing was disarranged. But he had suffered no harm, and a hasty search through his pockets convinced him that neither his watch nor money had been taken.

"Well, that's the first time hold-up men ever tackled me," murmured the young millionaire, as he walked back to the scene of the struggle, and picked up his umbrella. "I didn't know members of that profession cared to come to Hamilton Corners. I guess I'd better notify the police. It might be dangerous for other people, to have such scoundrels about."

Keeping a sharp lookout, lest the men return, but feeling pretty sure that they had had enough, Dick turned into a better-lighted street, and, going to the house of an acquaintance nearby, he called up the police station, and reported through the telephone his experience.

There was much wondering and excitement at headquarters, and the chief promised to send sev-

eral officers to the scene of the outrage at once. Dick met them, but the search that resulted amounted to nothing. The men had disappeared, and even in daylight to hunt for them would have been difficult, to say nothing of a chase in the storm and darkness. The chief promised to have his men keep their eyes open the rest of that night, and the next day, for any suspicious characters, but none was seen.

Dick's friends, from whose house he had telephoned, wanted to hitch up the horse and drive him home, but he said he was so wet that a little more water would not hurt him.

Accordingly he walked, one of the few policemen of Hamilton Corners insisting on accompanying the lad. Dick said it wasn't necessary, as long as he had Grit with him, but the chief of police was taking no chances with the millionaire's son.

Of course, there was plenty of excitement when Dick reached his father's house, and told Mr. Hamilton, and the boys there, what had detained him.

"You certainly had a narrow escape!" said Mr. Hamilton, seriously. "Do you think they meant to rob you, Dick?"

"What else would they have attacked me for? Of course, it must have been that. But Grit and I were too quick for them."

"Could you see their faces?" asked Paul Drew.

"No, it was too dark."

"Then, you couldn't tell whether or not they were the same men you met before in New York, and who got you on board their yacht?" asked Henry Darby, for the wealthy youth had told of his experience on the *Princess*.

"No—I don't believe they were the same fellows," replied Dick, slowly. "They were ordinary highwaymen," but, though he said nothing about it, he was puzzled over a remark one of the men had made while holding him. It was when the footpad said:

"We've got him! Where's the rig?"

"Rig—that is, horse and carriage," murmured Dick to himself. "I wonder why highwaymen wanted a rig? Unless," he added slowly, "they had an idea of carrying me off. But that's nonsense. Maybe I misunderstood them." But the more he thought about it and puzzled over it, the more it worried him, until he put the matter out of his mind and devoted his time to getting ready for the yachting trip.

No further trace was found of the footpads next day, and, though the Hamilton Corners police made inquiries in nearby towns, no suspicious characters were reported as being about.

Mr. Hamilton was worried, and considered a scheme of having a private detective guard his son, for he knew that many unscrupulous scoundrels had designs on wealthy lads. But Dick called the plan off.

"I'll soon be at sea, dad," he said, "and I guess

with Grit on board, and the fellows I'm going to take along we can stand off a small army of hold-up men."

"All right," agreed the millionaire, "but I'll feel easier when you are out of sight of land."

Dick had a telegram from Captain Barton, saying that the *Albatross* was only waiting the command to hoist anchor and start, and on the receipt of this the lad decided they would leave for New York the next day, as he had been delayed getting his outfit together, and Henry Darby wanted to close an important transaction in old iron before he went away.

As Dick, Frank Bender, Paul Drew and Henry Darby were being driven down to the depot in Dick's auto, to take a train for the metropolis, two lads, standing on a street corner, observed the happy quartette.

"There they go," observed Guy Fletcher, a town lad whose father was quite well off. "There they go, and I wish I was going off on a trip like that myself."

"Not with Dick Hamilton," added Simon Scardale, who was Guy's crony. The two lads had no friendly feelings toward the young millionaire, and, indeed, Simon had once tried to make Dick lose considerable money. "Dick Hamilton hasn't much use for us, nor we for him, Guy. I wouldn't care if his yacht sunk at sea."

"I don't know's I would, either, though I

wouldn't want any one to get drowned. But, come on, and I'll shoot you a game of pool."

"Can't. I'm dead broke."

"I'll pay for it," offered Guy, as Dick's auto swung around a corner and as the two lads, who were rather inclined to a "sporty" life, turned to seek a pool "parlor," they were confronted by an elderly man, with a small tuft of white whiskers on his chin, which moved up and down as he talked.

"Was that Dick Hamilton who just passed?" asked the old man.

"Sure," replied Simon, flippantly. "Do you know him?"

"I guess I ought to, I'm his uncle," was the answer. "But I couldn't see very good, 'cause the sun was in my eyes. Now, didn't I hear you say you didn't care whether or not his yacht sunk."

"Oh, we were only fooling," spoke Guy, with an uneasy laugh, thinking he was to be called to account for the remark.

"Oh, you needn't worry," returned Ezra Larabee, quickly. "I just happened to hear what you said, and it occurred to me that perhaps you two lads, who, I believe, are acquainted with my nephew, would like to earn a little money easily. Would you?"

"Would we? Well, I should lose a gold tooth if we wouldn't, old sport!" exclaimed Simon, slangily. "What's the game?"

"Suppose you come with me," answered Mr. Larabee, and he looked around hastily to see if he was observed before leading the two ill-favored lads down a quiet street.

Meanwhile, Dick and his friends continued on in the auto. They stopped at the bank where Mr. Hamilton had his private office, to say good-by, and half an hour later were speeding toward New York in a fast express. Grit was in the baggage car, but he cried and whined so mournfully, because he was out of Dick's sight, that his master had to go forward from the parlor coach to pay frequent visits to his pet.

Arriving at the big city, the young millionaire piloted his friends to the same hotel where he had stopped before, and they were assigned to a suite of connecting rooms. Dick then sent for Tim Muldoon, the newsboy, who shortly appeared, resplendent in a new suit, and looking quite different than when he first came under his friend's notice, as a ragged "fresh-air kid."

The young owner of the *Albatross* had sent word to Captain Barton that he was in town, and would shortly come aboard, and Dick asked that the yacht be in readiness for putting to sea at once.

"Now," said our hero to his friends at the hotel, "I have to go see Mr. Blake, the lawyer, and then I guess I'm done with business for a while. I want to ask his advice about locating those Cuban relatives of my mother."

"Guess I'd better go along with you," suggested Tim. "You might be held up again, and I know almost every detective in New York. I could signal to one in a jiffy for you, and we'd have bully fun arrestin' the fellows. It'd make a corkin' story. Shall I come?"

"Oh, it's hardly necessary," objected the rich youth, but Tim insisted on it, and went with his friend in the taxicab.

However, nothing happened, and after stating the case about the missing relatives to the lawyer, and listening to Mr. Blake's advice, Dick put in his pocket a letter the attorney had given him. It was addressed to Don Ferdinand Hondora, a Havana lawyer.

"He will give you any assistance in his power, in locating the Valdez family," said Mr. Blake, as he bade his young client good-by.

"Now, then, for the *Albatross!*" cried Dick, as he returned to the hotel and greeted his chums.

But there was still a delay, for every one wanted to purchase several articles, forgotten in the departing rush, and this required visits to a number of stores. But finally, with their trunks and suitcases well packed, the crowd of happy lads entered a big auto which Dick hired, and were soon at the dock, where they took a motorboat out to Dick's steam yacht.

"Welcome on board!" cried Captain Barton, cordially, as the youthful millionaire and his party mounted the accommodation ladder, while

the blue flag at the masthead fluttered down, indicating the presence on the yacht of the boat's owner. "We're all ready and waiting for you, and the tide is just on the turn." Grit had already leaped on deck, and, at a word from his master, made friends with the commander.

"Is Widdy here?" asked Dick, looking about for a sight of the old seaman.

"He is," replied Captain Barton, "and I've made him honorary second mate, at your suggestion."

"Oh, yes; there he is," cried Dick, waving his hand toward the grizzled sea dog, who stumped about near the ship's bell, as proud as the proverbial peacock to be thus recognized by the millionaire skipper.

"Now, fellows, make yourselves right to home," invited their host. "We're going to live here quite a while, and I hope you find everything comfortable."

"If we don't it'll be our fault," observed Tim Muldoon, looking about with awe, for the yacht was handsomely fitted up.

"What's the matter, Henry?" asked Dick, noting the young iron merchant staring about him, in rather a dazed fashion.

"Oh, I was just wondering how much old scrap iron I'd have to sell to buy a boat like this," was the answer, and Dick laughed.

The anchor was hoisted to the musical clank-clank of the winches. The accommodation ladder

was slung up alongside, and with a hoarse blast from her whistle the *Albatross* slowly swung around with the outgoing tide. From her funnel there poured black smoke, and from the steam pipe there spouted a jet of white vapor. Under her stern the water was churned to foam, and a white "bone" appeared at her sharp bow.

"We're off!" cried the young captain, gaily.

"Three cheers for Skipper Hamilton and his steam yacht!" yelled Paul Drew.

"Cut it out!" ordered Dick, turning red. "You can cheer the boat, but not me."

But his companions did not heed, and sent out their ringing cries. Commanders on other vessels nearby heard, and, thinking a gay party was starting off on a cruise, saluted the *Albatross* with the regulation three blasts of their whistles, to which Captain Barton responded, so that the progress down the bay was somewhat in the nature of an ovation, as other craft, following suit, also rendered homage.

Down through the Narrows steamed the fine yacht, gathering speed; out past Forts Wadsworth and Lafayette, threading her way along the buoyed channel, passing Coney Island on the left, swinging out more to sea as Atlantic Highlands was sighted, and then, pushing across the nose of Sandy Hook, the *Albatross* flew on toward the deep ocean.

"We're off!" cried Dick again, as he leaned

over the rail and watched the blue water. "Off for Cuba, and all sorts of adventures, fellows."

There were more adventures in store for the young millionaire and his chums than they ever imagined.

CHAPTER X

UNCLE EZRA'S OFFER

SIMON SCARDALE and Guy Fletcher had heard something of Dick's Uncle Ezra. They knew of his dislike for spending money, and they were not a little surprised, therefore, when he led them toward a restaurant, shortly after the young millionaire had gone to the depot in his auto.

"I believe he's going to treat us to a dinner," remarked Simon, in a low voice to his companion.

"Don't be too sure," was the guarded response. "He's one of those fellows who squeeze a dollar so hard that he gets enough feathers off the eagle to make a sofa cushion."

"Well, boys," remarked Mr. Larabee, as he paused in front of the eating place, "I got up early this morning, to take the first train here from Dankville, and I didn't eat much breakfast. So I think I'll go in here for a cup of coffee. You wait outside, and when I get through I guess I can put you in the way of making a few dollars."

"Do you want us to wait *outside?*" asked Simon, suggestively.

"Yes; why not? You had your breakfast; ain't you?"

"We also ate early," spoke Guy, with a grin at his companion; "didn't we, Simon?"

"Sure," answered the other. "Besides, if Mr. Larabee has anything to say to us it's more private in the restaurant than out in the street. Some one might see us here."

Uncle Ezra made a wry face. He had outlined a certain plan of procedure for himself, along the lines of what he considered was his duty, and he had made up his mind that it would cost him some money. Yet, when the time came to begin spending, he was averse to it. But he did not see how he could get out of it.

"It's bad to eat in between meals," he remarked, still pausing on the threshold of the restaurant. "I wouldn't do it myself, only I'm quite hungry."

"So are we," said Guy boldly, and he added: "If you want us to play any game on Dick Hamilton, you've got to pay us well for it. He doesn't like us, and he wouldn't hesitate to do us some harm. So if you want us to help you——"

"Hush!" exclaimed Uncle Ezra, nervously looking around, and taking a tighter grip of his purse. "Some one might hear you. Come on in, but, mind you, I'm not going to pay for a whole breakfast for you boys. A cup of coffee, and a sandwich, is all you can have. I'm only going to take coffee, and very weak at that. Maybe I can get

a weak cup for three cents. They charge awful for coffee in some of these places."

The boys had gained their point, however, which was to be invited inside the restaurant, and soon the three were seated at a table in a secluded corner of the room.

"A cup of weak coffee," ordered Mr. Larabee, as the waitress came to the table.

"Strong coffee and griddle cakes to start with, and then ham and eggs," ordered Simon.

"I'll take the same," spoke Guy.

Mr. Larabee turned pale and cried out:

"Here! Hold on! I thought you boys were going to——"

"I guess, Guy, we'd better be going," interrupted Simon, gravely, as he got up and reached for his hat. "Mr. Larabee doesn't want to do business with us."

"Yes, I do. Sit down!" cried the miserly old man. "Oh, dear! boys have such terrible appetites. You may bring me a very small cup of weak coffee," he said to the waitress, who seemed amused at something.

"It's all the same price," she stated.

"What? Haven't you any cheap cups—any at half price?"

"No."

Uncle Ezra groaned, and, while he sipped his beverage, he kept a watchful eye on the well-filled plates of Simon and Guy. They were doing hearty justice to the meal they ordered.

"Pretty good cakes they have here; eh, Guy?" mumbled Simon, pouring some maple syrup over the last brown one on his plate.

"Fine! yes," agreed his crony.

"What do you say to another helping before we tackle the ham and eggs?"

"I don't mind."

Simon raised his finger to summon the waitress.

"We'll have some more cakes," he ordered grandly, "and be sure to have the ham and eggs kept hot. Two more plates of cakes."

"No—no!" gasped Uncle Ezra, almost overturning his cup of coffee.

"Do you want three plates?" asked the girl, turning to him.

"I—er—no—of course, not," stammered the old man. "I never eat 'em. They give me indigestion, and then I have to pay a doctor's bill. I was just going to say——"

He looked appealingly from Guy to Simon and from Simon to Guy. The lads winked at each other.

"Queer what an appetite I've got," murmured Simon. "I didn't know I was so hungry."

"Me either," added Guy. "Do you think another plate of cakes will be enough?"

"Well, I don't know——"

"It's all you'll git!" snapped Uncle Ezra, quickly. "Do you think I'm going to pay—I mean you'll have indigestion something terrible," he

finished, for he saw that the pretty waitress was looking sharply at him.

"Oh, well, I guess with one more stack of the buckwheats and with the ham and eggs and another cup of coffee we can make out," conceded Simon, and the second plates of cakes were brought.

Uncle Ezra sat in gloomy silence during the remainder of the meal. Simon and Guy ate the last of the ham and eggs, and drained their coffee cups.

"I *would* like a cigar," began Simon, in a reflective sort of tone.

"Then, you'll buy it yourself," fairly growled Mr. Larabee. "Boys shouldn't smoke, nor men neither. Now, if you've finished, and the land knows you've eaten enough for two days, we'll talk business. I have some work I think you can do for me, but it must be kept quiet. I'll pay this bill, though probably it'll be terrible high, and then we can go to some private room. Is there a secluded room here?" the old man asked the waitress.

"Yes," she assented, as she handed Mr. Larabee a slip with the amount of the charge on it.

"As much as that?" he gasped. "Can't you make it a little less?"

"Those are the regular prices," she answered with scornfully curling lip, as she handed him the bill of fare. He scanned it carefully through his spectacles, and, finding that the waitress was

right, slowly counted out the change. He wanted the girl to accept, with the other money, a quarter with a hole in it, which piece he had vainly tried to pass several times before, but without success. She took it to the proprietor, who offered to accept it at fifteen cents.

"No, I won't take less than twenty-three for it." said Uncle Ezra. "It's a very small hole," and he put the quarter back in his pocket, to save for a future occasion.

Carefully closing the door of the private room, to which the waitress showed him, Mr. Larabee had a long talk with Guy and Simon. That there were differences of opinion was evident from the loud voices which came from the apartment at times. Finally the old man was heard to say:

"Well, that's my offer; take it or leave it."

"It's very small pay, considering the risk we run, and counting that the boat might sink in a storm," said Guy.

"Hush!" begged Mr. Larabee, "not so loud! Some one might hear you. Will you do the work, or not? I only want you to help the two men I've engaged."

"Guess we might as well," assented Simon. "It will be a good trip for us. And you want us to help get Dick——"

"Will you be quiet?" pleaded Mr. Larabee. "Now it's settled, and you can meet me in New York, say, in two days."

"Then leave us the money for our railroad

fares," demanded Guy, and with many a wry face, and after some hesitation, Uncle Ezra took out his wallet, removed a leather strap and several wrappings of cord from around it, and counted out some bills. With crafty smiles on their unpleasant faces, Guy and Simon pocketed the cash.

"Now, Dick Hamilton can look out for himself," said Guy, as the three left the room. "I'll get even for the way he once treated me."

"So will I," added Simon. "Only I hope Grit, his dog, isn't around when the thing comes off."

CHAPTER XI

PLUM DUFF OVERBOARD

REMAINING on deck until the yacht was well on her way down the Jersey coast, Dick and his chums at length decided that they would go below and arrange their belongings in their staterooms. Captain Barton turned the wheel over to Ted Midwell, the first mate, who, with old Widdy, and his short pipe to keep him company, would navigate the *Albatross* until the commander returned on deck. Mr. Barton wanted to have a talk with Dick, to arrange certain details, and then pick out the two watches who would, in turn, have charge of the vessel.

"Isn't this slick, though!" exclaimed Tim Muldoon, as he gazed about below decks, and inspected the stateroom assigned to him. "It's great to be a millionaire!"

"Yes, it's lots of fun when you can have a boat like this," admitted Dick, "but——" He did not complete the sentence. He was thinking of the men who had attacked him in the dark, and those who had lured him to the other yacht. "A millionaire's life is not all roses."

Captain Barton showed the boys how to stow away their belongings to the best advantage. Dick's things had been put in the owner's cabin, which consisted of a large stateroom, a little parlor and a private bath.

"Oh, say, this is too gorgeous for me," objected the young millionaire. "I want a room like the other fellows."

"No, you stay here," advised Paul. "Don't you s'pose we want to put on some style when we have visitors? As soon as you come on board, down comes the blue burgee, to show you're ready for company, and then we chaps will escort 'em down below here, chuck a big bluff, and you can serve 'em with cocoa and cakes, or whatever other form of stuff they are addicted to."

"It sounds good," admitted Dick, with a laugh, and he was finally prevailed upon to occupy the rooms designed for the owner. Captain Barton had a good-sized stateroom near Dick's, and the other boys were provided with comfortable quarters adjoining, so they were all together. Grit was given a kennel on deck, but he knew the freedom of the yacht was his, and he poked his nose into every corner, from the engine room to the chart house.

Their trunks were put away, after their clothes had been taken out, and the boys arranged their rooms, donned suits in keeping with their characters as sailors, and then were ready to go again

on deck. That is all but Dick and the captain, who wanted to have a talk.

"What's the matter, Henry?" asked the millionaire's son, as he saw the young iron merchant standing irresolutely in front of his stateroom.

"I don't know, but I can't seem to get used to it," was the reply. "Seems as if I'd ought to be hitching up, to go out and get a load of junk, or see a man about buying some, or else I ought to feed my horse, so his ribs won't stick together."

"Drop all that," commanded Dick, with a laugh. "You're out for pleasure now, and I want you to enjoy yourself. Get up on deck and watch the waves. Maybe you'll sight a wreck, and can get a lot of old iron out of it."

"Maybe," assented Henry, chuckling, but it gave him something to think about, and he hurried up the companionway with the others.

Dick and the captain discussed various details of the voyage. As the youthful owner was in no hurry, it was agreed not to crowd on any speed, but to proceed leisurely along, stopping at Savannah to see if Innis Beeby would join them, and then going on down the coast to Cuba. They would land at Havana, and from there Dick would begin to make inquiries concerning his mother's distant relatives. After that their program was not made out, but the young millionaire wanted to cruise about between Florida and Cuba, stopping at some of the many Florida keys, and, perhaps, spending a few days camping on one.

Captain Barton submitted to Dick a schedule of the management of the yacht, how he proposed dividing the crew into watches, and other matters which the lad, as owner, must sanction.

"I leave it all to you," said Dick. "We're out for a good time, and we're going to have it. I guess we'd all like it if we could help navigate some."

"Of course, you may," agreed the captain. "I'll be glad to teach you boys the rudiments of it, for it will be useful in case of trouble. Well, now that's settled, I think I'll go on deck and take the noon observation."

"And I'll watch you," said Dick, "for that's a good thing to know how to do. Another matter, Captain Barton, let the crew have plenty of good stuff to eat. I've read how sailors weren't treated any too well, and I'd like those on this boat to have the best."

"They'll get it," was the answer, with a laugh. "Your lawyer, Mr. Blake, said your father had written to him on that point, and the stores we took aboard can't be beat, even on an ocean liner. The crew will live higher than they have on many a voyage before this."

"I'm glad of it," and then Dick followed the captain on deck, while the other lads gathered about them to witness the taking of the noon observation.

The *Albatross* fairly flew along the blue sea, putting knot after knot behind her, leaving New

York and Hamilton Corners farther and farther astern, and slowly forging toward Cuba, where, had Dick but known it, a curious and trying experience awaited him.

"Let's get Widdy to tell us a sailor's yarn," proposed Frank Bender, toward the close of that afternoon, when the lads had inspected every part of the ship, from the engine room to the chart house, and had even climbed part way up the shrouds.

"Fine!" cried Dick. "Widdy knows some good sea stories," and they gathered about the sailor who sat on a coil of rope, smoking.

"An' so," concluded the old salt, at the finish of his story, as he loaded his short, and rapidly blackening pipe, with some very dark tobacco, "an' so we was rescued an' taken aboard, an' the first thing my messmate, Marlinspike Ned, called for was plum duff, an' what's more, he got it."

"What's plum duff?" asked Paul Drew.

"It's a sailor's plum pudding," volunteered Dick, who had read many sea tales.

"Right," assented Widdy, "only it's better."

"I think I could make some," said the wealthy lad, who was not a little proud of his cooking abilities, and who had often shown his culinary skill when in camp.

"Ah, my boy!" exclaimed the old sailor, "plum duff ain't what it used to be. It ain't got the same flavor, split my lee scuppers if it has!"

"I'm sure I could make some that would have,"

declared Dick. "I'm going to try, too. Do you think the crew would like some?"

"Dash my belayin' pin, but they would!" exclaimed Widdy.

"That settles it!" cried the young yacht owner. "I'll make a lot, and we'll have some aft, too, fellows."

"Not any for mine, thank you," said Frank Bender, hastily, moving off to try a new acrobatic stunt he had been practising.

"Why not?" asked Dick, somewhat indignantly.

"I don't believe you know the difference between plum duff and sea biscuit," was Frank's answer, and he dodged behind a deck chair, to be safe, in case Dick threw anything at him.

"You'll see," was the yacht owner's comment, as he moved toward the galley, where a fat German cook, Hans Weyler, presided.

Dick's chums wanted to see him at work, but he shut himself in with the cook, and soon curious sounds proceeded from the galley. There was the rattle of pots and pans, and an occasional deep-voiced German exclamation, followed by Dick's calm words.

"*Ach himmel!* Vy you do it dot way?" cried the cook, so that he could be heard from one end of the yacht to the other.

"Because that's the right way," answered Dick.

"But, oxcuse me, Herr Hamilton, dot stuff

should boiled be, und you haf roasted it on der oven alretty yet."

"Sure, I'm baking it. That's the proper way to do it. I'll steam it afterward."

"Ach! Vot a foolishness vaste of der good t'ings," was the cook's despairing remark.

"Fellows, there's going to be some fun before this plum duff is made," prophesied Paul Drew.

"It sure looks that way," agreed Frank, as he balanced himself on his hands and head on a coil of rope.

Dick was in and out of the galley several times. On each occasion he seemed to have accumulated a little more flour on his clothes or face. Finally, after more than an hour's work, he announced triumphantly:

"Now, fellows, it's done, and I want old Widdy to have the first sniff of it. He said I couldn't make one, and I want to show him that I can. Ask him to step here, Tim."

The newsboy found the old salt splicing a rope, and soon Widdy, having put away his pipe, stumped toward the galley. Dick emerged, gaily bearing on a large platter a round, brown, smoking object, with a cloud of steam hovering over it, and a most appetizing odor wafting from it all about the deck.

"Here, Widdy, take a look at this!" cried Dick, proudly. "Is this plum duff, such as you used to get, or not?"

"It looks like it," admitted the old sailor, carefully.

"How does it smell?" asked the young millionaire, holding it toward the old salt.

"It certainly do smell like it," further confessed Widdy.

"It *is* it!" insisted Dick. "Now the crew will have some for supper to-night, and I guess you fellows will admit that I can make a sailor's plum pudding as good as the next one."

With a smile of triumph at his chums, Dick advanced toward them, bearing the smoking platter. He was going to display the duff to them, but, as he neared the rail, the yacht lurched, and Dick gave a little jump to retain his balance. The platter tilted. The plum duff began to slide off.

"Look out!" shouted Frank Bender, making a spring toward Dick.

"I've got it!" cried the millionaire's son.

He tried to straighten up, and, at the same time, keep the platter on a level keel. A moment later, before the eyes of all his chums, the elaborate concoction slid off the big plate, over the yacht's rail, and splashed down into the sea.

"Plum duff overboard! Plum duff overboard!" yelled old Widdy, stumping forward and catching up a coil of rope on the way. "Plum duff overboard! Lower a boat!"

"Well, split—my—lee—scuppers!" exclaimed Dick, slowly, as he peered over the side. "Wouldn't that frazzle your main topsail!"

CHAPTER XII

SAVED FROM THE SEA

For an instant after Dick's disgusted exclamation no one spoke. Then Paul, with a regretful sigh, remarked:

"It certainly smelled good."

"It *was* good," declared Dick. "I put twice as much stuff in it as was necessary."

"Maybe that's what was the trouble," suggested Henry Darby. "Likely it was topheavy, as I once had a load of old iron, and it overbalanced."

"Well, I like your nerve!" spluttered the young millionaire, with a show of pretended anger. "Comparing my plum duff to a lot of old iron! It was Frank Bender's fault that it was lost overboard."

"My fault?" demanded Frank. "How do you make that out?" and he leaned far over the rail, to look back toward where the plum pudding had disappeared in the ocean.

"Your fault—yes!" repeated Dick. "But look out, or you'll go overboard, too. If you hadn't made that jump for me, when you did, I'd have

managed it all right. It's up to him, fellows! Frank's to blame!"

"I am like pie!" cried the acrobatic lad, turning a handspring to calm his excited feelings.

"Of course, it's your fault," added Paul, with a wink at the others.

"Sure," came from Henry.

"Maybe it was Grit's fault," suggested Tim Muldoon, gently, for he wasn't quite sure whether Dick and his chums were in earnest or not. "I saw Grit trying to wag his tail, just as the puddin' went overboard."

"Tim, you've solved the mystery!" declared Dick. "It *was* Grit's fault. Grit, you old sinner, don't you know any better?" and the dog leaped about joyously, barking in delight at the fun and excitement.

"Well, it's gone, and I reckon the crew doesn't mingle any plum duff with their ship's biscuit tonight," observed Widdy, with a sigh. "It sure did smell good, Mr. Hamilton, and it looked good, too," and the old sailor recoiled the rope he had grabbed up in his excitement. Captain Barton came on deck, then, to inquire the cause of the fun, and laughed when told the story of the pudding, to the rescue of which Widdy had sprung so valiantly.

But if there was no plum duff for supper there were other good things, for Dick had well stocked the yacht's larder.

"Der crew needn't mind so mooch," spoke the

fat German cook. "I'll make 'em noodle soup, mit onions in, und I makes it goot und strong," and the crew did full justice to the generous quantity Hans sent to the forecastle.

The boys did not go to their staterooms early that night, but sat up on deck, listening to yarn after yarn, reeled off by old Widdy, who, every now and then, interrupted his narratives to stump to the side, empty out the ashes from his short pipe, and refill it. But at length Captain Barton suggested that it was getting late, so Dick and his chums went below, for their first night aboard the steam yacht.

They were lulled to rest by the soft swish and murmur of the waves, and the hum and throb of the powerful engines, which were urging the fine craft over the water.

The young yachtsmen were up in time next morning to witness the swabbing down of the decks, in which task Dick and the others insisted on taking a hand, as the work was a novelty to them. Barefooted, and with trousers rolled up, they helped with the hose, which was attached to a steam pump, and used the big swabs with good intentions, if not with skill.

"Pretty good for land-lubbers," Widdy condescended to say, as he watched the work.

"Well, if it doesn't do anything else," observed Dick, "it gives one a tremendous appetite. Hans, don't you dare burn the omelet this morning."

"*Ach himmel!* Me burn a omelet! I vould as

soon bite mine own ear, Herr Hamilton. Me burn a omelet!" and the cook was quite indignant, until Dick's laugh told him it was a joke.

Coming up on deck after a substantial meal, Tim Muldoon, who was first out of the companionway, uttered a cry.

"Hi, fellers, here's a ship that's been wrecked!" he cried. There was a rush to the rail and the boys saw, not far off, on the port side, a large vessel, with queer stumpy masts, on the tops of which were big, round objects.

"Is it sinking?" asked Henry Darby. "Can't we rescue the people?"

"That's a lightship," explained Captain Barton, who was just being relieved at the wheel by Widdy. "It's the one about twenty miles off Cape May, the southernmost point of New Jersey. We haven't made very good time during the night, or we'd be farther south. But I thought it best to proceed slowly, until I got better acquainted with the yacht."

"That's right," agreed Dick. "We're in no hurry." The lads watched the lonely vessel, anchored so far off from land, until they had left it quite a distance aft, and then they found new matters to occupy their attention.

"This is certainly great, Dick," remarked Paul Drew, some hours later, as he sat in a steamer chair near his chum. "It beats turning out at reveille, forcing yourself into a tight uniform, and getting ready for drill and chapel; doesn't it?"

"Yes, but old Kentfield is all right, at that. This is good for a change. But wait until we get to Cuba, and wait until we camp out on one of the Florida keys. Then we'll be right in it."

"This is good enough for me," observed Henry. "If I only was sure that the old iron business, and my horse——"

"Drop it!" commanded Dick, with a laugh. "This is no time——"

He ceased speaking, and arose to observe Widdy, who had stumped to the yacht's side, and was earnestly gazing at some object on the water.

"What is it?" demanded Dick, as he advanced to where the old sailor stood, bracing himself against the rail, for there was quite a sea on.

"It's a small boat," was the reply, "and I think some one is in it."

"A small boat!" repeated Dick. "Wait and I'll get a glass."

"A boat," murmured Paul, as he came forward, while his chum hurried to the chart house. "Maybe there's been a wreck, and these are the survivors."

"Such things have happened," agreed Widdy. "Yes, it's a boat, sure enough," he added a moment later, as a small object was seen for an instant on the crest of a wave, and then disappeared in the trough of the sea.

Dick took a quick observation through the binoculars when the boat next rose, and immediately uttered a cry:

"There is some one in it!" he shouted. "I can see 'em moving about! Where's Captain Barton? We must stop the yacht to rescue them!"

"What's up?" asked the commander, coming on deck at that moment.

"Yes, it's some one, or something in that boat," he agreed, after an observation. "Mr. Midwell," he added to the first mate, "signal for the yacht to lie to, and order a boat lowered. We can't pass the poor creature by."

"I'm going to help with the rescue!" cried Dick. "Come on, fellows! We'll all go."

"Better take the dory, then," suggested Captain Barton, for one of those substantial small craft, which could live in almost any sea, was included in the complement of the *Albatross'* boats.

Tim Muldoon was not quite bold enough a sailor to care to venture in the small craft, and Henry Darby did not want to go, but Dick, Paul and Frank Bender, with two of the sailors, made up the party that set off to the rescue. Grit was wild to accompany his master, but Dick gently ordered him back.

With lusty arms the sailors, aided by Dick and Paul, who insisted on each taking an oar, pulled toward the small boat, which was seen one instant, and the next lost to view. As they neared it, after fifteen minutes of rowing, for it was farther off than it looked, Dick cried:

"Fellows, there's a baby in that boat!"

The oars were rested between the thole-pins

and, above the gentle swish of the water against the sides of the dory, could be heard a wailing cry, coming over the waste of water.

"Give way!" shouted Dick, as he bent to the ashen blade once more. "We've got to save that baby!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE MERMAID'S SONG

FORWARD shot the boat, impelled by the sturdy muscles of the sailors, Dick and Paul. In another minute the dory was lifted high on the crest of a wave, while the drifting craft was down in the hollow. The pitiful crying-whine sounded more plainly, and a moment later Dick shouted:

"Fellows, it isn't a baby at all. I can see it plainly now. It's a puppy! A little, brown puppy!" And, at the sound of the lad's voice the frantic animal redoubled its cries.

"Well, we've got to rescue it just the same," declared Frank, after a moment's blank look at his chums.

"We'll go alongside and take him out," suggested the young millionaire. "The poor brute must be almost starved."

"Better go easy," cautioned one of the sailors. "If you and Mr. Drew will unship your oars, Mr. Hamilton, Larson and I will go as close as we can. I don't want to have the side of our dory stove in, and there's quite a swell on."

Dick recognized the fact that neither he nor Paul were skilful enough in handling a heavy boat at sea to successfully accomplish the work of rescue, so the two lads took in their oars.

"Maybe we can pick up the painter and tow the dinghy back," suggested Larson, and Kenby, the other sailor agreed. By this time they were quite close to the drifting craft, and the puppy was leaping from seat to seat in its eagerness, crying, whining and barking by turns, and almost ready to leap overboard, so lonesome and terrorized by hunger was it.

"Easy now, old chap," counseled Dick, in soothing tones, and the puppy nearly wagged off its tail in joy.

Fishing about at the bow of the dinghy, Larson did manage to pick up the rope, without coming dangerously close. It was made fast, and once more the oars began to propel the dory toward the yacht, it being decided to wait until the arrival there before taking out the puppy.

But the animal had no such intentions. Seeing what probably looked as if its rescuers were deserting it, the little dog, with a frantic howl, leaped overboard, and tried to swim to the boat containing Dick and the others.

"Grab him!" cried the young millionaire, ceasing rowing, an example followed by the others, and when the half-starved pup came alongside Frank Bender lifted him in. Instantly the brute

wiggled away from him and tried to crawl over and nestle in Dick's arms.

"Here, hold on! Wait a minute! Not so fast! Give me a sponge and a towel!" begged the wealthy lad with a laugh, trying to keep the dog in the bottom of the boat, at the same time appreciating the poor brute's evident pleasure in being rescued. "He must have absorbed about a gallon of water," added Dick, ruefully, as he looked at his clothes, and the little salty puddle forming at his feet.

"Queer looking baby," commented Paul, with a grin at his chum.

"That's all right. It did sound like one crying: didn't it?" and Dick appealed to the sailors.

"Sure," agreed Larson, respectfully.

"Certainly," said Frank.

"I'll take him on board and feed him up," went on the millionaire's son, "and then——"

"Maybe Grit will eat him before you get a chance to feed him," suggested Paul.

"By Jinks! I never thought of that," admitted Dick. "I wonder if I can risk it?" for Grit had little use for other dogs, though he never went out of his way to fight. "I'll chance it, though," the lad went on. "I'll make Grit be friends with him."

Nor was it a difficult task, for the little puppy was so weak and forlorn, as it sprawled awkwardly on deck that Grit, after an ominous growl and a showing of his ugly teeth, changed his temper

all of a sudden, and began to lick with his tongue the rescued brute.

"They're all right now," declared Dick, with an air of relief. "That's the way to behave, Grit. I'm proud of you!" Grit wagged his stump of a tail, and the puppy thumped his longer appendage weakly on the deck.

"What will you call the new one?" asked Captain Barton.

"Call him Gritty," suggested Henry Darby, "for he has some of Grit's grit to live all that while in the open boat."

"Gritty it shall be," decided Dick. "I wonder where he came from, and how the dinghy got adrift?"

"It's a boat from some fishing vessel," said Captain Barton, when the craft that had contained the puppy was hoisted aboard and examined. It had no name on, and was rather battered and old. "It must have gone adrift, for the end of the painter is frayed, as though it was chafed through. Probably the dog was asleep in it when it drifted off," added the commander.

"Well, he's a new member of the crew," said Dick. "Here, Hans, give my puppy some quail on toast, or beefsteak smothered in onions. He's hungry."

"I gif him some veak soup—dot's vot he needs vurst," decided the big German cook, picking up the half-starved animal, and carrying it off to the galley. Grit followed, with a happy bark. He

seemed to have accepted Gritty at once as a friend and companion.

The yacht was gotten under way once more, slipping through the water like some graceful fish, and making better time, for now the new crew was familiar with the engine and boilers, and more speed was being maintained.

What with watching the running of the engines, helping in taking observations, signaling other vessels they passed, and strolling about the deck, Dick and his chums found plenty to occupy their time. The young millionaire and Paul had taken up the study of wireless telegraphy during their last term in Kentfield, and, as the *Albatross* had an apparatus aboard, the two cadets crackled off several greetings to their friends, while Mr. Hamilton was kept informed of the progress of the yacht, and also sent some messages in answer to those of his son.

The *Albatross* ran into a storm on the third day out, as she was rounding Cape Hatteras, that always treacherous point on the Atlantic coast, and for a time the boys had all they wanted of sailor life, and a bit more. It was the first time any of them had been seasick, and Henry Darby and Frank Bender were the ones to succumb. Frank was too limp to even move an eyelash, Dick said pathetically as his friend was stretched out in his berth. As for Dick and Paul, they behaved like old sea dogs, and even Tim Muldoon, though it

was his first voyage, stood up well under the strain.

The yacht pitched and tossed, now on top of a big green wave, and again sliding down into the trough, as though she was going to the bottom. But she was a staunch craft, and when they had passed the point, with its conflicting currents, the storm had blown itself out, and a period of calm and fog succeeded.

Through the gray, damp mist the *Albatross* was creeping one afternoon, with her whistle sounding mournfully at regular intervals, and Widdy, and another sailor, stationed in the bow to peer through the blanket of whiteness, to give warning when anything should loom up in front of them.

"Wouldn't it be better to anchor, or run in to shore?" suggested Paul, as he and Dick were standing forward, trying in vain to pierce the mist.

"It's just as well to keep on going," explained Widdy, with the freedom engendered by the young millionaire's treatment of him. "It's better to run into some other ship than to be run down yourself, if it's goin' to be done. An' we're safer out here than in nearer shore. We'll be all right, if——"

Widdy suddenly paused, and leaned forward in a listening attitude. Dick and Paul rubbed the drops of fog from their eyes, in a vain attempt to see something. What would loom up in front of

them? Some ocean liner, which might cut them in two, and send them swirling to the bottom? Dick felt a sense of fear.

Then, out of the fog, there came the sound of a voice singing, and at the first words the old sailor fairly leaped back from the rail, his wooden leg thumping on the deck. To the ears of the watchers came this song:

"Oh, it's ten long years since I sailed away,
When the wind was blowing free.
And I've anchored since in every port
That's touched by the salty sea.

"There was once just ten in the Sallie Sue,
As we sailed the watery plain.
But the sharks gobbled every one but me,
And now I'm back again."

"Get below, boys! Get below!" yelled Widdy, showing every appearance of fear. "Get below, if you value your lives!" and he clapped both hands over his ears, and hobbled toward the companionway, his pipe falling from his chattering teeth, and smashing to fragments on the deck.

"What's the matter?" cried Dick.

"That's a mermaid! A mermaid singing!" replied the old salt, "and it's death to every man within the sound of her voice! Get below, boys! Get below!"

CHAPTER XIV

JUST IN TIME

Dick and Paul did not know whether to laugh at the old sailor, or follow him in his mad rush for the forecastle. This latter inclination was not because of any fear of the superstition regarding mermaids, but because they thought there might be a collision with the unseen vessel, and it would be wise to prepare for it.

Once more, out of the fog and mist came the voice:

"I remember well, in the days of old,
How a sailor lad named Bill
Fell overboard near the Hole in the Wall,
A dolphin's maw to fill.

"Oh, it's there one night, a terrible sight,
Did happen——"

"Ahoy there!" yelled Dick. "Who are you, and where are you going?" for it needed but a moment's harkening to the second part of the song to demonstrate that it issued from the mouth of some burly follower of the sea and not from the salty lips of some fish-maiden.

"Who are you?" back came the challenge from the swirling fog.

"The yacht *Albatross,* bound for Havana," answered Dick. "Who are you?"

"I'm a lobsterman, fog-bound, and my 'put-put' boat is out of gasolene. For the love of Davy Jones, have you any aboard? I've been here ten hours, and I'm hungry enough to eat a raw crab. Give a hail until I get my bearings."

"A lobsterman!" cried Paul. "And old Widdy thought it was a mermaid!"

Jack called to Midwell, the mate, to have the whistle sounded, and then, yelling to the unseen mariner to approach slowly, the two lads peered forward from the bow of the yacht, for the first glimpse of the helpless craft. There was the sound of oars being used, and presently there loomed up through the mist a small dory motor-boat, containing a grizzled son of the sea, his craft piled high with boxes of lobsters.

A moment later Widdy popped his head up through the companionway. Behind him were several of the crew.

"Is—is she—has she sung again?" asked the wooden-legged sailor, cautiously.

"It doesn't happen to be a 'she,' Widdy," answered Dick.

"You don't mean to say that it's a he-one, do you?"

"It's a lobsterman," spoke Paul. "He's out of gasolene. Have we any, Captain Barton?" for the commander was approaching.

"Yes, I guess there's some among the stores."

The lobster boat came alongside, and a very much relieved fisherman looked up at the trim yacht.

"Hum, that's quite some of a smack," he remarked with calm enthusiasm. "I'm right glad I met-up with you. I calculated I'd have t' stay out all night, or until the fog lifted, an' that ain't goin' to be very soon. Has any one a chaw of tobacco?"

"Was that you singin'?" demanded Widdy, suspiciously, while one of the crew, at Captain Barton's direction, went to get some gasolene.

"Well, if you call it singin' I was," guardedly answered the lobster man.

"Why and wherefore was you a-doin' of it?" inquired the wooden-legged sailor. "I took you for a mermaid, an'——"

"A mermaid! Ho! Ho! A bloomin' mermaid I'd make! Why I was only a sort of hummin' to myself because I'd lost my fog horn overboard, an' I didn't want to be run down, with all these lobsters aboard, for lobsters is high now. That's why I was sort of hummin' an' singin', as you call it. Has any one got a chaw of tobacco?"

"Well, seein' as how you're not a mermaid, you can have it," responded Widdy, as he passed over a generous portion. "But it's the first time I ever heard of a lobsterman losin' his fog horn overboard. Some careless of you, wa'n't it?"

"You might call it that," admitted the other,

cautiously, "but I was so busy haulin' up my pots an' emptyin' 'em that I didn't notice it right away, an' you know," he added gravely, "a horn won't float."

"Hum," remarked Widdy, as he took back what was left of the plug of tobacco. The gasolene was handed down into the small craft, and the lobsterman insisted on giving Dick a generous portion of his catch in payment therefor.

"Ho, for some lobster salad!" cried the young millionaire, as he held up by the back a squirming crustacean. "Hans, get busy making about a peck of mayonnaise dressing."

"*Yah!* I dresses dot sea-bug all right!" exclaimed the cook with a grin. "I knows how to fix dem!"

The lobsterman started his gasolene engine, and "put-putted" off through the fog, seeming to get his bearings instinctively. He called a good-by, and once more started his fog-horn song.

"Well, I wish we'd meet such mermaids every day in the week," commented Paul Drew, as he looked at the pile of lobsters on deck, for he, too, was very fond of them.

The *Albatross,* which had been hove to on meeting the small craft, was once more sent slowly forward. The fog lifted about two hours later, and the speed was increased. There was a fine supper aboard Dick's yacht that night, and even the crew had lobster salad, as a sort of side dish with their pork and beans.

"We'll be at Savannah to-morrow," announced Captain Barton one afternoon—a glorious, sunny afternoon, when Dick and the boys were sitting about the deck in steamer chairs. "Do you think your friend, Mr. Beeby, will meet you there, Captain Hamilton?"

"I don't know," answered Dick. "You never can tell what Innis Beeby will do. He's always changing his mind at the last moment, and he's so fat that it doesn't worry him."

"Nothing does," said Paul. "I hardly think he'll join us, though."

"Well, we'll put in and see," decided the lad of millions.

At Savannah, when the yacht had docked, Dick found a telegram awaiting him from his chum, Beeby. It read:

"Will be with you at ten A.M. to-morrow."

"And, just as likely as not he won't," commented the young captain. "But we'll lay up here over night and see."

Ten o'clock the next morning came, and the boys eagerly scanned the pier for a sight of the fat lad. There were all sorts of people coming down to the water-front, but Innis Beeby was not of them.

"Guess we'd better get under way," suggested Dick, when eleven o'clock had passed, and there was no sign of the cadet.

The gang-plank was being hauled in, and Captain Barton was about to swing the engine room telegraph signal over to "half-speed ahead," when a shout sounded up the broad pier.

"Here he comes!" cried Paul. "Here comes Innis, on the run!"

The boys saw a very stout lad waddling along at what he probably considered a run, but which was far from it. In front of him, trundling a hand-truck, containing the cadet's trunk and suitcase, was a tall, thin porter, built on the lines of a racer. He would rush along and, on looking back, would see his employer about twenty feet in the rear, coming slowly.

"Can't you hurry, sir?" the porter shouted, so that Dick and the others heard him. "The ship's about to sail, sir."

"Tell—'em—to—hold—her," panted Beeby. "I'm—com—ing!"

Forward ran the porter, trundling the truck. After him came Beeby, going slower and slower, for he was winded. Captain Barton, unaware of the impending arrival of Dick's guest, had shoved the telegraph lever over. There was the ringing of a bell in the engine room, and the yacht gathered way.

"Hold on!" cried Dick. "Stop the engines!"

"Run out the gang-plank again!" ordered Paul.

"Come on, Innis, come on!" yelled Dick to his friend.

"Get on the truck, and let the porter wheel

you," suggested Paul. He scarcely believed the fat cadet would do it, but the suggestion came at just the right time, and the fleshy lad called:

"Here, porter, let me sit on top of my trunk. I can't go another step."

"Sure!" assented the man, and, a moment later, he was assisting the late passenger up on top of the baggage. There was a laugh from the crowd on the pier, in which Dick and his chums joined, but Innis Beeby cared little for that. He could breathe easier now, and there was a better chance of him catching the yacht.

The porter broke into a run with his load, and soon was alongside the *Albatross*. But the vessel was now in the grip of the tide, and, though the engine had been stopped, the yacht was moving. The gang-plank could not be run out, for a snubbing post was right in the way.

"Get off, and I'll throw your baggage on board!" cried the porter, for there was, as yet, but a small space of water between the steamer's rail and the bulkhead.

"Yes—but—how—am—I—going—to—get—on—board?" panted the exhausted cadet.

"We'll pull you up!" yelled Dick, for it would mean a lot of work to stop, and back up to the landing place.

Up over the rail went tumbling the trunk and suit-case. Dick threw Beeby a rope's end. The stout lad grasped it firmly. He was quite muscular, from his athletic practice at the academy.

"Now, all together, fellows!" ordered Dick. "Haul him up!"

There was a heave and a pull—a straining and creaking of the rope. Innis planted his feet against the side of the yacht, and "walked" up, after the manner of scaling a wall at the military school. His training stood him in good stead. A moment later Beeby was on deck, and only just in time, for the yacht swung far out from the pier.

"Well—I'm—here—fellows," said Beeby, slowly, as he flung a dollar to the dock for the porter. "I—said—I'd—come—and—I'm—here—(puff) I'm—(puff) here—(puff) all right—(puff) am—(puff) I—not—(puff), Dick?"

"To use a classical and poetical expression, you *be*," answered Dick, with a laugh, as he grasped his chum's hand, "and we're mighty glad to see you, Innis. Let her go, Captain Barton."

The *Albatross* swung out into the channel.

CHAPTER XV

TIM MULDOON DISAPPEARS

"WELL, Beeby, and how are you?" asked the young millionaire, when the late arrival had somewhat recovered his breath, and had slumped down in a steamer chair, with a sigh of relief.

"Fine and dandy. Came pretty near not making it, though; didn't I? I'd been visiting some relatives, here in Savannah, and they kept me until the last minute. I tried to run, but——"

"The less said about your running the better, Innis. Let me shake hands with the *late* Mr. Beeby," and Paul Drew joined the group about the fat cadet.

"I may be a bit late, but I'm far from being a dead one, Paul. Say, Dick, my boy, it looks very fit here," and the new guest gazed about the yacht with marked approval.

"Yes it'll do for a starter," admitted the owner of the *Albatross*. "We've hardly got settled down to the run of things yet."

"It looks all right to me," went on Beeby. "She's a pretty boat, and I'm glad I didn't miss her. Got much of a party aboard?"

"No, not many. Oh, I forgot, you haven't met my friends, Henry Darby, Frank Bender and Tim Muldoon," and Dick introduced the newsboy with no less ceremony than that with which he presented the young acrobat, who, as some would have regarded it, was more in Innis Beeby's "set."

"Glad to meet you fellows," said the fat cadet, rising slowly and ponderously, and shaking hands. "Guess I'm able to go below now, Dick, and stow away my luggage. Where am I to berth; in the engine room?"

"We're going to put you forward with the crew," spoke Paul. "They need a fat and jolly companion."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea for me," answered Beeby. "I was off yachting down east with a friend of mine, once, and I enjoyed being with the crew immensely. They had no end of good yarns to spin."

"We've got a chap aboard who can do the same thing," said Dick. "We'll have to introduce him to Widdy, fellows."

"Sure thing," chimed in Frank Bender, and then, as he had been keeping quiet for nearly ten minutes, he proceeded to climb up the shrouds and pretend to make a dive into the bay.

Beeby was given a stateroom near Dick's, and when his trunk and suit-case had been put away, and he had donned a rough suit, in which he said he felt more at home, he went on deck with the others, and was shown about the yacht. He found

much to admire, and warmed Dick's heart with his praise.

For the stout cadet was a bit older than our hero and his chums, and had seen more of the world. In consequence the young millionaire rather looked up to him, and valued his opinion. On his part Beeby had formed a strong liking for Dick, and soon made friends with the other three lads. Paul Drew he had known for some time.

In Captain Barton, Beeby discovered an old friend. They had met once, when Beeby was on a yachting cruise, and, though the commander had not recollected the name when Dick had casually mentioned his friend, the sailor at once recalled the fat lad's face and figure. Soon they were renewing their acquaintanceship, and swapping yarns in the pilot house.

Swinging out of the harbor, and into the deep water beyond, the *Albatross* was quickly making good time down the coast. Dinner was served, and a jolly party gathered in the dining saloon, Hans Weyler outdoing himself in the matter of providing good things to eat.

"I say, Dick, but you *are* a lucky dog," remarked Beeby, somewhat enviously, as he leaned back in his chair, after the dessert. "How did it all happen, anyhow—this fine yacht, the way you take it off, and all that?"

"I hardly know myself," answered Dick. "I'm afraid I'll wake up some morning and find it all a dream."

"And you've nothing to do on the entire trip but have fun, eh?" asked the stout lad.

"Well, mostly; though, as I've told you, I expect to look up some of my mother's distant relatives in Cuba. But that may not take long, and then we'll go off on an exploring expedition, and live on a desert island for a change."

"Fine and dandy!" exclaimed Beeby, enthusiastically.

The rest of the day was spent in sitting about deck, the boys telling stories, or swapping school experiences, while occasionally Widdy would come aft on some errand, and Dick would detain him long enough to have him tell some sea yarn, more or less true.

Grit and Gritty gamboled about together, playing like two puppies, for Grit, usually grave and dignified, as suited a blooded bulldog, seemed to renew his youth in the presence of the little waif from the sea.

There was an indication of a storm that night, and Captain Barton, looking anxiously at the barometer, ordered everything made snug below and aloft. The wind freshened about midnight, and when the boys awoke early in the morning they found the yacht pitching and tossing in an angry sea.

"Whew!" exclaimed Beeby, as he just avoided being tossed out of his berth, "rather rough, isn't it, Dick?"

"Oh, so-so. Does it bother you?" asked Dick, from his stateroom.

"Not a bit. I've got my sea legs on now, and I feel fine. I'm going on deck for a breath of air. Come along."

They dressed hastily and, followed by the other lads, ascended the companionway, not without some difficulty, for at times the *Albatross* seemed trying to stand on her beams' ends, while at others she appeared to want to plunge to the bottom of the sea.

"It's some rough," remarked Paul Drew, as he clung to the handrail.

"But the boat seems to go right through it," added the young owner, proudly.

Once they poked their heads outside they were made aware that there was plenty of what sailors call "dirty" weather. There was a strong wind blowing, and a rain was falling, being driven sharply into the faces of the lads, while the spume and spray from the sea, with its tang of saltiness, soon made their cheeks feel as though they had on thin masks of brine.

"Oilskins and sou'westers to-day," remarked Dick, as he dodged back inside, almost wet through from a brief dash across the deck.

"It'll be stay below for mine," decided Frank Bender. "I can practise some of my new motions without much effort. All I'll have to do is to stand still and be tossed about."

"Yes, stand on your head in the dishpan, bal-

anced on a tumbler," suggested Paul. "You'll have a nice tumble, if you do."

"And I guess you'd like to see me," suggested the aspiring acrobat. "Well, I'm not going to. Tim, you and I will get up a daily paper. We can gather news by wireless. I'll write out the sheets by hand, and you can sell 'em."

"Sure," agreed the newsboy. "I'm lost without something like that to do. I'm not used to this sporting life. I'd like to see an extra edition out now."

They ate breakfast under difficulties, and many cups of coffee were spilled in places not intended for them. But, for all that, it was jolly fun, and, donning oilskins a little later, they all went on deck, where they watched the big waves which were running quite high, their crests whipped into foam and spray by the wind, which every moment was increasing.

Tiring of the exposure to the rough weather, they came below in about half an hour, and put in the rest of the morning at various occupations. Some wrote letters, to be posted when sighting the next inward-bound coast steamer; Dick was going over some details of the mysteries of navigation with Captain Barton, and Beeby was peacefully slumbering, braced up on a divan, with many cushions to soften his descent in case he was pitched to the cabin floor.

The striking of eight bells, or the noon call to dinner, saw reassembled in the dining-room Dick

and his friends. None of them seemed to have lost their appetites because of the rolling and pitching, for, by this time, even the most indifferent lad was a good sailor.

"Well, I guess we can sit down, and spill some soup in our laps," remarked the young yacht owner, looking around at his chums. "But, hold on, where's Tim?"

"He was here a while ago," volunteered Henry Darby. "I saw him going toward the engine room."

"Yes, he likes to see the machinery," added Frank Bender. "I'll call him." But Frank presently returned to report that Tim had not been in the engine compartment.

"Look in his stateroom; maybe he's asleep," suggested Beeby. "I had a nice nap myself."

But Tim was not there, and by this time Dick was becoming a bit worried. He and Paul made a search in various parts of the yacht, but Tim was not seen, nor did he answer their calls.

"That's rather odd," mused Dick, with a puzzled air.

"Did you look in the pilot house?" asked Frank. "Maybe he's in there with Captain Barton, who hasn't come out yet to get his dinner."

"Tim's not here," was the commander's report a little later, and on his face there came an anxious look, as Dick mentioned the newsboy's absence. "Did you try the forecastle?"

But Tim was not in the crew's quarters, though

he was a general favorite with the men forward, and often spent much time in their company.

"Let's get this down to a system," suggested Dick. "Who saw him last—and where?"

It developed that they had all seen the newsboy quite recently, but when it came to saying where there was a conflict of opinion.

"Well, this yacht isn't such a big place," remarked the owner. "If he's on board we ought to find him."

"Maybe he's fallen overboard," spoke Henry Darby, almost before he thought of the significance of his words.

"I saw him with his oilskins on," volunteered Widdy, who had been called into the general conference.

"Was this before or after we all had them on, and were on deck?" asked Paul Drew.

"Afterward. In fact, it wa'n't more'n an hour ago. He come up on deck in 'em, an' then went below."

"Are you sure he went below?" asked Dick, quickly.

"Well, no; not exactly. I saw him start for the companionway, but just then we struck a big wave, and I had to grab a lifeline myself. So I didn't notice, but I think he went below."

A curious hush fell upon them all. They were all thinking of the same direful thing. Another hasty, but thorough search of the yacht was made, and there was no trace of Tim.

"He *can't* have fallen overboard!" cried Dick. "We'd have heard him cry."

"Not in the noise of this storm," spoke Captain Barton, solemnly. "I'm afraid he's gone, boys. We were boarded by some big waves," and a gloomy silence followed his words.

"Poor Tim," murmured Dick, "and to think I urged him to make this voyage. It's all my fault!"

"Don't give up so soon," urged Beeby, who was the most hopeful person in the group. "Let's have another look. Dinner can wait. We'll find Tim Muldoon, if he's aboard. He's a New Yorker, and they're hard to lose anywhere. We'll find him yet," and the search was begun again.

CHAPTER XVI

UNCLE EZRA AS A SAILOR

Two days after the *Albatross* left Savannah harbor, another small steam vessel made her way in. Had any one been interested in her identity he could have made out the name *Princess* on bow and stern, but to the casual observer this meant little or nothing, save that the craft was not a very spruce-looking member of the royal family.

There was an air of neglect about her. The paint was scraped off in many places, and was dingy in others. When she rolled a bit on the swells a glimpse could be had of many barnacles clinging to her copper plates. In fact, she was rather a forlorn *Princess* who came to anchor on the edge of the channel.

"Now, you boys get into a boat, go ashore and see if he's been here," said an old man, whose chin was adorned with a small bunch of white whiskers, that moved up and down when he talked. "Just make some inquiries, and find out if the yacht *Albatross* has been here, and when she left. And, mind you, don't you go to spending money, 'cause I won't give you any more."

"Maybe Sam or I had better go along," suggested the shorter of two men, who stood leaning over the yacht's side. "We can make better inquiries than either Guy or Simon, Mr. Larabee."

"That may be, Sam Newton," admitted Dick's Uncle Ezra, whom, I suppose, the reader has already identified as the old man in question. "That may be, but I want you and Ike Murdock to stay on board, and have a talk with me. We've got to plan to catch my nephew, and he's ahead of us in a fast yacht."

"Then why did you want to stop here?" asked the man addressed as Ike Murdock.

"I wanted to make sure he'd been here. You never can tell what that boy will do. Since his father so foolishly let him have all the money he wants, he goes all about, looking for ways to spend it."

"And you're going to stop him," suggested Sam Newton.

"That's my intention. He'd have been stopped by this time if you men had managed to get hold of him, as I told you to, and paid you for. You bungled the whole business, and made me have to hire this steamship to take after him. Why didn't you get him into my hands secretly, as I thought you would?"

"Because he was too smart for us," admitted Ike, bitterly. "We had him fairly on board this yacht, and only for that old sailor, who happened

to recognize one of our crew, your nephew would be where you want him, by this time."

"And that would be in a place where he can't squander his fortune," went on Uncle Ezra, savagely. "If his father won't teach him habits of thrift and industry, and how to save his money, I will, for he is my only sister's child. I may be running a big risk in doing it this way, but it's worth it."

"It certainly is a risk—for you and for us—if we're caught," murmured Sam. "But I don't care, as long as I get well paid."

"Me either," added Ike.

"Well, are you and Guy ready to go ashore?" asked the old man, addressing Simon Scardale. "All I want to find out is if my nephew's yacht has been in this port, and when she left. I heard Dick say to his father that he was to stop here to take aboard some friend of his. Oh, the way my nephew wastes his money! He doesn't care how big a party he has aboard to feed. It's a shameful waste!"

"Yes, we're ready to go," said Simon. "But can't we signal for a motorboat to take us off, and bring us back? It's quite a way to row ashore."

"No, you can't signal for no motorboat," snapped Mr. Larabee. "Motorboats cost money, and I've spent nearly a thousand dollars on this business already, and I suppose I'll have to spend more. You boys can row. It'll be good exercise for you. Boys should exercise."

"Then, can't you advance us a little more money?" asked Simon. "I need a new necktie."

"You don't need one aboard this ship, and when we get through, and I pay you the rest of your wages, after you've helped me to capture my nephew, you can buy as many neckties as you want. Now, hurry off, for I don't want to stay here any longer than I have to. It costs money every day I have this steamer."

Grumbling at the stinginess of their employer, Guy and Simon, with the help of one of the few sailors on the *Princess,* lowered a small boat, and pulled laboriously ashore. Meanwhile, Mr. Larabee went below with the two men, whom, had Dick seen, he would have at once recognized as those who acted so strangely toward him in New York.

"If we can't intercept him any sooner, we'll have to go all the way to Cuba, I guess," admitted Mr. Larabee, after a long talk with the two unscrupulous men he had hired. "But it's going to cost me a power of money."

"What of it? You'll get it all back, won't you?" asked Ike.

"Indeed, I will, and with interest, too. But I hate to put out so much at once. This is more than I've spent in a whole year at Dankville, and we've only been on this trip a few days. Oh, why didn't you hold on to him, when you had him that night in the rainstorm at Hamilton Corners?"

"We had a very good reason," said Sam. "His

dog had too good a hold on us. I can feel his teeth yet, and my leg is still sore. If I'd got hydrophobia I'd had to sue you for damages, Mr. Larabee," and Sam winked at Ike.

"No, you wouldn't!" exclaimed the crabbed old man. "You signed a paper to do this work at your own risk, and I'll hold you to it. You can't sue me, no matter what happens."

"Oh, well, let's not quarrel," suggested Ike. "Now, when the boys come back we'll know what to do. While we're waiting, I guess I'll eat."

"Seems to me you're always eating," grumbled Uncle Ezra.

"The salt air gives me a good appetite," said Ike.

"Me, too," added his crony.

"It takes a powerful lot of money to run a steamship," complained the old man. "If I'd a known how terrible much it took I don't believe I'd ever gone into this thing, though I do want to prevent my nephew from wasting his fortune, and this was the only way I saw, for it was useless to appeal to him or his father."

"Still, kidnapping is a dangerous business," suggested Ike.

"Don't say that word!" cried Mr. Larabee, quickly, looking around apprehensively. "Ain't I told you this isn't a regular kidnapping? I'm only doing it for his good. It ain't kidnapping in the real sense of the word."

"Have your own way about it," conceded the ill-favored man. "I'm going to eat."

Guy and Simon came back in about two hours, to report that Dick's yacht had been in Savannah, and had left.

"Then we must get right after him!" cried Uncle Ezra. "I only hope we can overtake him before he gets to Cuba. It will be terribly expensive to go there. Now, get up steam, or make anchor, or whatever the proper term is, and sail fast. He may give us the slip."

There was soon activity aboard the *Princess,* and a little later the dingy vessel, with her dingy crew, and the oddly-mated occupants of the cabin, were sailing over the course taken by the young millionaire and his chums. Ezra Larabee had undertaken a desperate and peculiar plan to "save" his nephew.

It was not long before the pursuing yacht ran into the same storm felt by those aboard the *Albatross,* and, being a smaller and less staunch craft, the one hired by the old man pitched and tossed rather dangerously.

Mr. Larabee had taken to his berth as soon as the ship left the harbor, for he was but an indifferent sailor, and the least motion made him ill.

When the storm came his malady increased, and he thought surely his last hour had come.

"Oh, why did I ever try this plan?" he wailed. "Why did I come to sea? I might have known better. I wish I was back at Dankville. Saman-

thy didn't want me to come, and I wish I'd heeded her words of warning. Oh, I'm sure I'm going to die. Get a doctor, can't you?"

"There's no doctor aboard," said Ike. "But you'll be all right as soon as it stops blowing. I'll have the cook make some strong coffee for you."

"Maybe that will make me feel better," gasped Mr. Larabee. "Oh, why didn't you get my nephew hid away when you had him in Hamilton Corners that night?" and he turned his face to the wall and groaned.

"Haven't I told you it was because his dog attacked us?" asked Ike, indignantly. "We couldn't fight that dog."

"Why didn't you shoot it? I hate the brute!"

"So do I," murmured Sam, rubbing his leg reflectively. "I'll shoot it the next time I get a chance."

"Do, and I'll give you a dollar extra," spoke Uncle Ezra. "Oh, how miserable I am! Is that coffee never coming?"

"Be here directly," said Ike, grinning cheerfully at his crony, for they were used to rough weather.

And the *Princess* staggered on through the storm, trying to catch up to the *Albatross,* while in his berth, a most forlorn figure, Mr. Larabee tossed and moaned in anguish.

CHAPTER XVII

WIDDY HEARS A VOICE

Innis Beeby's confident words, that Tim Muldoon would be found did not find echo in fulfilment. A systematic search of the whole interior of the yacht was made without success.

"He couldn't be hiding on deck—that is, maybe hurt, and have fallen under something; could he?" asked Frank Bender.

"We'll look," agreed Dick, as they fairly crept up the companionway, for the rolling and pitching of the yacht made other progress impossible.

It needed but a few glances around the wind-and-water-swept deck to show that Tim was not there. Everything had been made snug, in preparation for the storm, and there was no place where a youth might lie concealed.

"I'm afraid he's gone," spoke Dick, solemnly. "But I'm not going to give up. We'll put back, Captain Barton, and see if we can pick him up. When he went overboard he might have grabbed something to cling to, and still be floating. We'll put back."

"Put back!" exclaimed the commander. "It's hardly possible in the teeth of this wind. The gale is increasing, and our only hope is to run before it. We would barely move trying to make headway against it."

"We're going to put back," insisted Dick, and the captain put the wheel over, the *Albatross* swinging around in a big circle.

Mr. Barton had not exaggerated the strength of the storm. If it had been hard work scudding along before it, aided by the wind, while the screw threshed the water to foam, it was exceedingly difficult to stem the howling wind that whipped the big green waves into spume.

But Dick's yacht was a gallant craft, and she staggered back over the course she had just covered, making better work at it than many a larger vessel would have done, for she was not so high in the water as to offer much resistance to the wind.

On either side of the rail, while a lookout was stationed in the bow, the boys watched for a sight of Tim. They looked for a black speck amid the foam of the waters, but saw none. When they had gone back far enough to cover the point where the newsboy had been missed, Dick gave the order to swing around again, and run before the storm. The yacht rode more easily at once, and she was not boarded by so many smashing seas.

Even then Dick would not give up, but he and

the others peered forward into the mist of rain with eager eyes, which, every now and then, were blinded by the salt spray.

They ate dinner in gloomy silence, occasionally some one making a remark about Tim's good qualities, and his jolly disposition.

"It makes me feel like turning back, and not making the trip," said Dick, "to have bad luck like this at the very start."

"It is too bad," agreed Beeby, "but maybe he'll be picked up by some other vessel, and saved. If he went overboard he might have grabbed something, and be floating. We could hardly see him in the rough water."

"Let's look on deck and see if any life buoys are missing, or anything else gone that he might have taken overboard with him," suggested Frank, and another hasty search was made. But it only increased the uneasy feeling, since none of the articles was missing, and gloom once more settled down.

The storm did not abate in violence all the rest of that day, and the boys sought their bunks with the yacht rolling and tossing on a heaving sea.

It was midnight, when the watch was changing, that Dick, who could not sleep, from thinking of Tim, heard voices in Captain Barton's room. One he recognized as that of the commander, and the other was Widdy's.

"I tell you I heard it, as plain as I'm hearin' you now," the old salt was saying. "I couldn't

be mistaken. It's in the after compartment, near the shaft tunnel, an' some of the crew heard it, too. It's the ghost of that mermaid, sir. She took the form of a lobsterman just to fool us that time, but she slipped aboard later in the fog, an' now it means death to some one aboard. I knowed we'd have no good luck from meetin' that there mermaid. I heard her voice, I tell you, captain."

Dick, who was partly dressed, slipped on his coat and trousers, and staggered to the captain's cabin. There he saw Widdy, looking wild and disheveled from his watch on deck, and plainly alarmed from some other emotion than seeing the big green waves.

"What is it?" asked the young millionaire. "I heard you saying something about a mermaid, Widdy, and——"

"Yes," answered the old sailor, with a bow. "That's right, Mr. Dick. It was my watch on deck, an' I was just comin' below. One of the men from the engine room come up to say there was a peculiar noise in the shaft tunnel. I thought there might be somethin' wrong, so I called Mr. Midwell, whose trick it was next, an' I turned the wheel over to him, an' come below. Me and Jim Carter, the chief engineer, went into the after compartment, sir, an' there we both heard it."

"Heard what?" asked Captain Barton.

"The mermaid groanin', sir. That was her,

disguised as a lobsterman, an' she slipped aboard to bring death an' destruction. That's why that poor lad fell overboard. It'll be some of our turns next."

"Nonsense!" cried Dick. "What you heard was probably the creaking and squeaking of the ship's timbers and machinery in the storm."

"Do ship's timbers groan like a man dyin', sir, an' call for help, sir?" inquired Widdy, solemnly. "Answer me that! Do the machinery cry for help? Answer me that!"

"Did you hear some one calling for help?" asked Dick, quickly.

"I did, sir."

"Wasn't it some one on deck, or didn't you imagine it?" inquired Captain Barton.

"I did not, sir," replied the old sailor, doggedly. "It was in the after compartment, sir."

"And what sort of a voice was it?" asked Dick, "and what did it say?"

"It was a voice, sir, like some one in pain, and it called 'Help! Help! Help!' three times, just like that."

"Well, why didn't you look further, see who it was, and help 'em?" demanded the captain. "Maybe it was one of the crew, who had fallen and broken his leg. Why didn't you look further?"

"Because, sir," answered Widdy, "it ain't healthy to help mermaids, an' Jim Carter an' me ran out as soon as we heard her voice. It was

the mermaid, sure, an' all on this ship are doomed. Davy Jones has rooms all ready for us in his locker."

"Don't be an idiot!" cried Captain Barton, sharply. "There are no such things as mermaids."

"That lobsterman was one," insisted Widdy. "He vanished into fog as soon as he got out of sight, an' turned into a mermaid, an' come aboard. She's here now."

"I suppose the lobsters he left us were mermaid lobsters, too," suggested the commander, trying to make the old sailor see how foolish was his superstition.

"I don't know nothin' about that, but there's a mermaid below, in the after compartment, near the shaft tunnel, sir, an' I know it!" insisted the old salt, shaking his head.

Dick Hamilton gave a sudden cry.

"Captain Barton, I believe I know what that is!" he exclaimed. "Come on," and he made his way toward the stern of the yacht, while the commander, wondering what was going to happen, followed.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PRINCESS PASSES

His excitement increasing at every step, Dick hurried to where Widdy had said the mysterious sounds came from. As the young millionaire and the captain entered the compartment they heard distinct groans, and a weak voice cried:

"Help me out! Help me out!"

"It's him!" cried Dick. "Get a lantern and help him out!"

"Help who out?" demanded Captain Barton.

"Tim Muldoon!" shouted Dick. "He's in there—in the shaft tunnel—hurt, most likely—that's where he's been all this while! Hurry and get him out! Show a light!"

Widdy, whose courage had returned with the presence of Dick and the captain, passed forward a lantern he had. Dick crawled into a dark passage, which was partly occupied by the long propeller shaft of the yacht. A moment later he uttered a cry.

"Tim! Tim! We're going to get you out! We thought you were drowned! Come and help me, captain! Tim's hurt!"

"Oh, I'm so glad you came," spoke the newsboy, faintly. "I—I thought no one would ever come. I—I crawled in here——" and then his voice went off into a weak whisper.

"He's fainted!" cried the young millionaire.

They soon had Tim out of his uncomfortable prison, and in his berth, where he quickly revived under the care of Captain Barton, who was a sort of doctor and surgeon combined, as indeed every seaman of ability is usually.

Tim's eyes slowly opened, and the color came back into his pale cheeks. They had taken off his heavy oilskins, which he wore when found in the after compartment. He looked around on the kind faces of Dick and his chums, who were crowded about the stateroom door.

"I'm still here—am I?" asked Tim, faintly.

"Yes, and we're glad to see you," spoke Dick. "We thought sure you had gone to pay Davy Jones a visit, as Widdy would say. But whatever in the world possessed you to do it, Tim? Were you in there all the while?"

"I guess so," answered the newsboy, while a spasm of pain shot over his face, as a lurch of the ship wrenched him in his berth. "Something's the matter with my ankle," he went on.

"Bad sprain," said Captain Barton, briefly. "That, and the knock you got on the head, made you insensible. You had a bad time of it. There's a lump on your head as big as a coil of rope."

"How did you come to go in there?" inquired Dick.

"Just to see what was there," replied Tim, with a faint smile. "I heard the engineer talking about the shaft tunnel, and the thrust block, and the propeller, and I wanted to see what they looked like. So I crawled in——"

"You couldn't see the propeller from inside the yacht," broke in Paul. "The screw is outside."

"I know that, now," went on Tim. "But I wanted to see what *was* in there. There wasn't anything else to do, and as the storm kept us all below decks, I thought I'd do a little exploring. I put on my oilskins, to keep my clothes clean, and crawled in the back part of the yacht. I found the shaft, and saw it going around, and then I must have slipped on some oil, or something, and fallen. Anyhow, it all got black, and I didn't know anything for a long time. Then I woke up, and felt a terrible pain in my leg and head. I tried to move, and crawl out, but I couldn't. I called, but no one answered."

"The noise of the storm was too loud," suggested Henry.

"Maybe," assented Tim. "Then I must have fainted again, and, when I got conscious once more, I yelled louder. Then I heard some one running away——"

"That was me," confessed Widdy. "I thought you was a mermaid."

"I wish I had been one," replied Tim, with a

rueful smile. "Then I'd have known better than to crawl in where I did. But I kept on calling, though I was getting weaker, and then——"

"Then we came," finished Dick. "Now, don't think any more about it. We'll doctor you and feed you up, and—well, don't go in there again."

"Don't worry—I won't," promised Tim, and then he took some quieting medicine which the captain mixed for him.

They left him to sleep off the effects of his ordeal, and the boys gathered in the main cabin, for a sort of impromptu thanksgiving meeting. The atmosphere of gloom had been dispelled, and they were all happy again, for the thought of one of the members of the yachting party being drowned would have spoiled the whole outing.

Tim was much better the next day, and the storm had blown itself out, so that he could limp up on deck. There the bracing air brought back the color to his cheeks, and he was soon himself again. The swelling in his ankle went down, and he was able to get about nicely on a crutch made by Widdy.

"We've got two cripples aboard now," said the old salt, with a grin. "Between us both, we'll make an able seaman, though."

Meanwhile the yacht was slipping through the water at a good rate of speed, lessening the knots between her and the island of Cuba. The boys found so much that was new and interesting to occupy them, that time passed all too quickly.

"Do you think you'll spend much time in Cuba?" asked Innis Beeby of Dick one afternoon, as they sat on deck.

"Well, I want to make a good attempt to find mother's relatives, and it may not be an easy task. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I've got a new camera, and I want to get some good views—that's all."

"Oh, I fancy you'll have all the chance you want. But if you've got a camera, why didn't you say so before? You can take some pictures here on board. I meant to bring one, but I forgot it. Bring out yours and snap some of us."

Which the fat cadet did, posing Dick and his chums in all sorts of attitudes, more or less nautical. The crew, too, came in for their share of pictures, and they were snapped collectively and individually, doing all sorts of things, from clambering up the shrouds to swabbing down the decks. Then Captain Barton had to pose as he was taking a noon observation, while Dick was taken in so many different styles that finally he rebelled, when he was requested by Beeby to don a ragged suit, and stand in the bows, with his hand shading his eyes, to represent a shipwrecked mariner looking anxiously for a sail.

But it was jolly fun, making snapshots, and even Grit and Gritty had to pose, while Hans, the cook was so delighted with the result of his snapshot, that he would have stood on his head for Beeby. For the cadet developed and finished the

pictures on board, improvising a dark room from a closet.

Down the coast went the yacht, past St. Augustine, Jupiter Inlet and other places on the Florida coast, and it seemed as if the cruise would be run off without serious incident, for they were nearing Cuba. But, one day, when in sight of the Bemini Keys, a group of little islands about sixty miles off Miami, Jim Carter, the chief engineer, hurried on deck to report to Dick and Captain Barton a break in the machinery.

"Is it serious?" asked the young millionaire, fearing for his fine yacht.

"No, only it will mean a delay of a day or so. My men can repair it."

"And will we have to lie-to all that while?" Dick wanted to know.

"We can use the sails, though we'll not make much speed," put in the commander.

"Oh, well, time is no object," remarked Dick, with an air of relief, and then, to the no small delight of the boys, the steamer became a sailing yacht, and they learned many new points in seamanship.

But, as the captain had said, they did not make very good time, for the sail area was small for a boat the size of the *Albatross,* and at times they barely had steerageway, for the winds were light and baffling.

It was on the second day of the machinery being out of commission (for the engineers had not

been able to repair it as speedily as they had hoped to) that, as Dick and his chums were reclining in deck chairs, the lookout exclaimed:

"Sail ho!"

"Where away?" demanded Dick, with a seaman's instinct.

"Astern, sir, and she's overhauling us fast. She's a small steamer."

They all looked to where a volume of black smoke indicated the presence of another vessel. The smoke became more pronounced, and, in a little while, the hull of a steamer was visible. The boys watched her through glasses. She seemed to be sailing the same course as was the *Albatross,* and was likely to pass close by. But, as she neared the sailing yacht, the steamer suddenly changed her course, and sheered off. She was, however, close enough to enable the boys to read her name without the aid of the glass.

"Princess!" exclaimed Paul Drew. "Why, Dick, isn't that the vessel on which they attacked you?"

Dick did not answer for a minute. He had snatched up the binoculars and was pointing them at the passing vessel.

"It might be the same one," he murmured, "yet the name is common enough. I guess——" He stopped suddenly. The glasses came down from his eyes, and he stared at the *Princess.* Then he cried out:

"By Jinks, fellows! It doesn't seem possible!"

"What's the matter?" asked Beeby. "See your best girl aboard her, Dicky, my lad?"

"No," answered the young millionaire, "but if I didn't know that he was afraid of the water, I'd say that my Uncle Ezra was aboard that vessel," and once more Dick took a long observation through the glasses.

"Your Uncle Ezra?" repeated Paul.

"Yes," went on Dick. "See that man standing near the rail? The man with the little bunch of white whiskers on his chin?"

"I see him," assented Paul, who had taken the binoculars from his chum.

"Well, he's the very image of my respected relative, only, of course, it can't be him."

At that moment the man at the rail seemed aware that he was under observation. He quickly disappeared from view, and the *Princess* passed on.

"I wonder if that could have been Uncle Ezra?" murmured Dick. "But, of course, it couldn't be. What would he be doing away off here?"

If Dick had only known!

CHAPTER XIX

AT HAVANA

THE machinery of the *Albatross* was repaired by the next day, and then the welcome throb and tremor of the screw replaced the stillness and quietness of the sails. But the boys welcomed the change, for, though it was ideal to slip through the summer sea like some great fish, without noise, they had become used to the swifter motion, and liked it.

"Well, we'll soon be at Havana," remarked Captain Barton, one fine moonlight night, when it was too lovely to go to one's stateroom. "Have you any special orders, Captain Hamilton?"

"None, except that we'll stay there until I can make some inquiries of Don Ferdinand Hondora, the lawyer, regarding my mother's relatives."

"And what after that?"

"I don't know, exactly. It will depend on what the lawyer says. We may cruise about, go to another part of Cuba, or go off camping on some of the keys. We'll decide when we get to Havana. I may have to take these Cubans back to New York."

The completion of the first part of the voyage was made in good time, and one morning, as the boys came up on deck Captain Barton, pointing to a line of haze on the horizon, said:

"There lies Cuba!"

"Good!" exclaimed Dick. "Now, we'll see what happens."

They at once got ready for a landing, though it would not be for some hours yet. Every one on the yacht, though the voyage had been most pleasant, was glad of the prospective change. Hans, the cook, got up a specially fine dinner in honor of the occasion.

"Haven't you anything for Grit and the puppy, Hans?" asked Dick, as he passed the galley. "They're both hungry."

"Sure, I feeds 'em," answered the German, who was cutting up some meat from pieces brought from the refrigerator, for the *Albatross* was fitted up with an artificial ice-making machine. "I gifs dem some nice bieces of meat," went on Hans.

A few minutes after this the young millionaire was startled to hear snarls, growls and barks coming from the direction of the galley, while, mingled with the noise made by the dogs was the voice of the cook crying:

"Don't! Stop I dells you, Grit! Behafe yourself alretty now! I did not mean to onsuld you. I—I—Oh, Herr Hamilton! Come quick alretty yet! Your bulldog will devour me! Oh! Ouch!"

A moment later a very much frightened Ger-

man cook burst out on the deck. He was carrying a plate of meat-scraps, and behind him, growling and snarling, came Grit, his legs working in and out like the pistons of a steam engine. But, as the animal's legs were short, and as the cook had long ones, the race might not prove so unequal.

"What's the matter?" cried Dick. "Stand still, Hans! Grit won't hurt you!"

"He vunt; hey?" cried the German. "Vell, I ain't goin' to take no chances—no, sir, Herr Hamilton! I runs; dot's vot I do! Stop chasin' me!" the cook cried, turning to glance at Grit. But this nearly proved disastrous for him, as he stumbled over a rope, and only recovered himself as Grit almost reached him.

"What does he want?" shouted Dick. "Here, Grit! Stop it! Come here! What does he want, Hans?"

"He vants me, but, py Jimminity, he don't got me, not if I knows it alretty yet!" responded the German. "I fools him!" and with that the cook, dropping his plate of meat, sprang up into the shrouds of the aftermast.

At once Grit lost interest in the chase, and stopped to eat the scraps of meat, while Hans looked down at him from his perch of safety.

"There, you see," said Dick, laughing. "The meat was all he wanted. Grit was hungry."

"Ha! I knows pretty vell alretty dot he vos

hungry," admitted Hans. "But I t'ought he vos hungry after me; so!"

"He was hungry after you," cried Paul Drew, who had witnessed the chase, and he doubled up with laughter.

"You can come down now," suggested Dick. "Grit won't hurt you."

"Vait until he has all dot meat eaten up, den I comes down," replied Hans. "He vunt be hungry so much alretty," and he would not descend until Grit, licking his chops, had gone to lie down in the sun.

"How did it happen?" asked the young millionaire. "I never knew Grit to chase any of his friends."

"I ain't no friend to him—not no more—no, sir," declared Hans, firmly. "I vos goin' to feed der dogs, as you tolt me, Herr Hamilton, und I got der meat, und I gif der little dog some first, und den your big dog, he growled avay down in his throat, und he took after me, un—vell—I runs, mit der meat—dot's all; see?"

"Yes, I see," spoke Dick. "Grit was jealous because you fed the puppy before you fed him. Grit is used to eating at the first table. He didn't mean any harm."

"Dot's all right, only me an' him ain't friends no more, dot's all," said Hans, with an injured air, as he descended to the deck. "I vos goin' to gif him—*Ach Himmel!* Der soup is burnin'! I schmell her!" and, with a cry of anguish, he ran

toward the galley, where he was soon rattling away amid his pots and pans.

If the soup was burned no one noticed it at the excellent dinner which the cook served later. He seemed to have gotten all over his fright, and he even spoke kindly to Grit, who appeared to have forgotten his temporary lack of manners.

The *Albatross* docked late that afternoon, and, with expressions of delight and wonder at the sight of what, to them, was practically a foreign city, Dick and his chums went ashore. They were soon in the midst of as much bustle and excitement as the slow-moving natures of the residents of Havana permit.

"By Jove! This is great, old man!" exclaimed Beeby, as he waddled up the pier, with a smile on his fat, good-natured face. "I've never been in Cuba. There'll be lots of new sights, and I can get some stunning pictures. There's an old man asleep on that bale who will make a good subject," and the stout cadet proceeded to snap the "subject." But, just as he was ready, some one called to the sleeping man. He awoke with a start, gave one look at Beeby and the camera, and, with a Spanish expletive, rolled off the bale, and ran away as fast as his legs would take him.

"Hum! I wasn't going to shoot you!" exclaimed the fat lad in disgust. "Now, I've wasted a film," for he had pressed the button just as the man moved.

The American youths were surrounded by a

crowd of natives, who talked rapidly, in "more or less United States" as Dick said. The young millionaire observed Tim looking wonderingly about.

"Miss anything, Tim?" he asked.

"Yes, I don't hear anybody hollerin' 'Extree—Extree!' down here," replied the newsboy, to whom the excitement of an edition, hot from the presses, was lacking.

"No, I fancy extras are few and far between down here," agreed Dick. "But, fellows, I want to go to see that lawyer, so as to know what plans to make. So, if you'll step in here, and have some chocolate on me, I'll leave you for a while, and come back," and the wealthy lad led his companions to a restaurant built partly on the street, with tables in the open air, where soon they were being served, while Mr. Hamilton's son asked his way to the office of the attorney, of whom he wished to make some inquiries regarding the missing Valdez family.

CHAPTER XX

OFF TO SANTIAGO

"Ah, Senor Hamilton, I will be most happy to do all in my power for you," remarked Don Ferdinand Hondora, the Spanish lawyer, when he had read slowly through the letter of introduction from the law firm of Blake & Carrington, which epistle Dick handed him. "Most happy to oblige you. You do me an honor to call on me thus, and to-morrow—or *manana*—as we Spaniards say—*manana,* I shall be most happy to set on foot an inquiry to locate the Valdez family."

"Can't you do anything to-day?" asked Dick, who was used to business being attended to promptly.

"To-day, my dear Senor Hamilton? To-day?" and the lawyer looked surprised. "Why, already I am in my office later than I ever stay. It is unusual that I am here to this hour. It just happened so by accident. No, nothing can be done to-day. Perhaps to-morrow—or the next day——"

"Why not to-day?" asked Dick, bluntly. "I am willing to pay——"

"It is not a question of money, dear Senor Hamilton," and Don Ferdinand Hondora shrugged his expressive shoulders, elevated his eyebrows, and made deprecatory gestures with his fat hands; "money does not figure. But now it is the hour for the band to play in the plaza, and I like to listen to it as I sit and sip my chocolate. Business is over long ago for Havana. I shall be most happy to have you join me at the plaza. My carriage will be here shortly."

"Thank you, but I have left my friends, and I must return to them," answered the youthful millionaire. "But I will be here early in the morning, and——"

"Not—er—not too early, if I may venture to suggest such a thing, my dear Senor Hamilton," spoke the lawyer, gently. "I seldom breakfast before ten, and at eleven o'clock I shall be most happy to receive you."

"Very well, eleven o'clock then," conceded Dick. "And then we can take the rest of the morning, and the whole afternoon, to looking into this matter."

"Pardon me, senor, but did I hear you aright—the *whole* afternoon, did you say?" and Don Ferdinand Hondora looked pained.

"Yes—why not?"

"Ah, but Senor Hamilton forgets that there is the noon siesta to be taken into consideration. One must have the siesta or—well, business is never done during the siesta or sleep hour," and

once more the Spanish lawyer shrugged his shoulders, raised his eyebrows, and threw his hands out in front of him as if he had no further use for them.

"Well," remarked Dick, with a sigh, "when you're in Rome, you have to do as the Romans do, I suppose."

"That's it, Senor Hamilton!" cried the attorney, with a relieved laugh. "And when one is in Havana, he goes to hear the band, he sips his chocolate, and he takes his siesta at the usual hour. To break the customs is to—well, it is never done," and once more he went through his little performance, which seemed to save him considerable in the way of talk.

"Then I'll meet you here at eleven o'clock," added the youth, as he turned to go. "I'll leave these papers, which my father gave me, with you, and, if you should happen to hear any news this afternoon, or evening, you might send word down to my yacht—the *Albatross*. We're going to stay on board to-night, and put up at a hotel to-morrow. So, if you have any word——"

"Pardon me, Senor Hamilton, it is not likely that I shall have any word of the missing family, who are distant relatives of your late respected mother, to-night—hardly possible. All business is over in Havana long ago. Now, I go to hear the band, and to drink my chocolate, and I would only be too happy to have your pleasurable company."

"No, thank you, I must get back," answered Dick, and, having witnessed Don Ferdinand Hondora give once more his shadow-pictures with his shoulders, eyebrows and fingers, Dick parted from him, after an elaborate series of bows and handshakes.

"This life is too slow for me," remarked our hero, as he got outside, and made his way back to where he had left his chums. "Business from eleven to twelve, and from three to four, I presume. Two hours a day! Whew! If dad was down here he'd turn things upside down, and as for Uncle Ezra, he'd have a conniption fit! A *siesta!* Good land! I'm beginning to feel sleepy myself!"

The youth walked rapidly along, thereby attracting much attention, for his pace was entirely different from that of the slow-moving and leisure-loving Cubans and Spaniards.

Dick found his chums waiting for him, and they had had their fill of the very excellent chocolate served to them. The young millionaire explained his visit to the lawyer, and amused them with his account of the easy-going methods in vogue.

"Think of a lawyer closing up his office to go to hear the band play!" exclaimed Dick.

"It sure is odd," agreed Beeby. "If it was a gall game now, it wouldn't be so bad."

"But there's nothing to hinder us from going to hear the band; is there?" asked Paul Drew.

"Especially as we're very likely to see some

pretty girls," added Frank Bender. "I say let's go."

"All right," agreed Dick, always ready to fall in with the wishes of his guests. "I'll call a couple of carriages. It seems that no one who can afford to ride walks in Havana."

Accordingly, in easy-moving, open carriages, drawn by rather sorry-looking specimens of horses, the lads were soon rolling down to the open plaza, where a marine band was already making music. The boys thoroughly enjoyed the varied strains, and they were equally interested in the scenes all around them. The day was fine, and a large throng was out, many Cubans and Spaniards, and not a few Americans strolling about, while more were in open carriages. Frank's remark about the pretty girls was not a bit exaggerated. There were hundreds of them, dark, languishing Spanish beauties, some of whom favored our friends with quick glances from their snapping, black eyes.

The boys dined in a Havana restaurant that evening, where they saw more to interest them, while the highly spiced food was a source of some conjecture to them.

"Guess I'll have to have some more water, Dick," spoke Tim Muldoon, after he had emptied several glasses.

"What's the matter; too much salt in something?" asked Frank. "I noticed it myself."

"No, it's too much pepper," replied the news-

boy. "Gee-horse! But I struck a mouthful of the red kind that kicks, just then!" and he drained his glass, which a waiter filled, the man laughing silently the while.

"I guess we'll have to get used to it," remarked Dick. "I should think, though, that, eating so much red pepper as these folks do, that they'd have a little more motion to them. 'To-morrow' seems to answer for everything. I couldn't stand it for very long at a stretch."

They spent that night on the yacht, after an evening in the plaza, where the band continued to play. The next day, at eleven o'clock, Dick again visited Don Ferdinand Hondora, who leisurely began to examine the documents regarding the Valdez family.

"It will be a difficult piece of work," he remarked finally, "but I think I can promise you a report in a month, Senor Hamilton."

"A month! I've got to have it inside of a week!" cried Dick, and, after much argument, and lifting of his eyebrows, shrugging of his shoulders and throwing out of his hands, remarking the while that such a thing—such haste—was never heard of in Havana, the lawyer agreed to do his best.

It was two weeks later before he made his final report, with Dick importuning him every day, for, after the yacht had been tied up at Havana seven days, our hero and his chums found they had exhausted the possibility of amusement in that

Cuban city. True, they made excursions inland, and enjoyed the slow-going, easy life, but Dick wanted action, and his plan of going to some lonely island, and camping out, seemed to strike his friends as just right.

So it was with no little satisfaction that the young millionaire was informed one day, by Don Ferdinand Hondora, that the case was closed, as far as he was concerned.

"I have made diligent inquiry, Senor Hamilton," spoke the Spanish advocate, "and your Valdez family is not in this vicinity. They did live here, but they left about the time this island was acquired by the United States. There was much confusion of records at that time, and the best I can learn is that the family now consists of father and son, the Senors Miguel and Raphael Valdez."

"But where are they now?" asked Dick, impatiently.

"Ah, now we are coming to it," spoke the Spaniard, with his usual course of motions. Dick thought he might have "come to it" some time ago. "I learn," the lawyer went on, "that they were last heard of in Santiago de Cuba. If Senor Hamilton is pleased to go there next week, or the week after——"

"Next week?" cried Dick. "I'll start to-night!"

"Ah, such haste!" murmured the Spaniard, as he looked at his watch. "Very well. It is now the hour for the band to play, and for me to sip my chocolate, but if you will come in to-morrow I

will be pleased to give you a letter to a lawyer friend of mine in Santiago. Come to-morrow——"

"Can't you give me the letter now?" interrupted Dick.

"Ah, Senor Hamilton, such haste! Already the band is playing, and I——"

"If I can't get the letter now, I'll have to leave without it, Senor Hondora. I'm in a hurry!"

"Ah, Santa Maria!" The lawyer's head nearly disappeared amid his shoulders, so high did he lift them, and his eyebrows were a half-circle, but he sat down, and slowly wrote out a letter by hand, giving it to Dick.

"Don't you use a typewriter?" asked the young millionaire.

"A typewriter? The saints forbid! It is too rapid—too—er—what you Americans call swift," explained the attorney, with a smile. "There is no need of such haste," and pocketing the generous fee which Dick paid, the lawyer bowed our hero out, with a look of relief on his face.

Five minutes later Don Ferdinand Hondora was in his carriage, riding slowly on his way to the plaza, to hear the band play, while Dick was hurrying toward his yacht.

"Well, the first part of my search ended in failure," he said. "Now to try Santiago."

That night the *Albatross* put to sea, on her cruise to the other side of Cuba.

CHAPTER XXI

THE KIDNAPPERS

Dick and his chums spent the better part of a week making the voyage around to the chief city near the southeastern end of Cuba. The weather was fine, and there were many novel sights to attract their attention. They passed several other vessels, and with some Dick and Paul exchanged wireless greetings. Dick sent several messages home, as did also his chums, and there were some aerograms in reply. Mr. Hamilton communicated with his son, and commended his plan of making a further effort to locate Mrs. Hamilton's relatives.

"But if you don't find them in Santiago, what will you do?" asked Beeby, when the boys and their host had talked over their plans.

"Go off on a little trip, come back, and try the next likely place," answered the young millionaire, grimly. "I'm going to find them."

As the *Albatross* swung into Santiago Bay, past the lighthouse at the entrance of the harbor, those on board of the trim yacht would have been in-

terested if they had known how closely they were observed from the deck of another vessel, hidden from view around the point. And the name painted on the bows of the hidden craft was *Princess,* though stress of weather had almost obliterated it.

Narrowly did an old man on the deck of the *Princess* watch Dick's yacht glide up the harbor. He was a man with a little bunch of white whiskers on his chin, and they moved up and down when he talked.

"Well," he remarked slowly, as he laid aside a glass through which he had been peering, "them fellers in Havana told us true. My nephew did sail for Santiago, and here he is."

"And I said we'd beat him here," remarked a man standing on deck.

"So you did, Sam Newton, so you did," assented Ezra Larabee, "an', because we got here first, I'll pay you the ten dollars extra, as I promised."

"When?" demanded Ike Murdock.

"Jest as soon as——"

"As soon as the kidnappin' is done?" asked Simon Scardale.

"Hush! Don't use that word!" exclaimed Mr. Larabee. "Ain't I told you this ain't a regular kidnappin'; not in the eyes of the law. It's for my nephew's good."

"Well, we'll soon have him, if things go right," muttered Ike. "Now, what's the program, Mr.

Larabee? Shall we follow that yacht up the bay or stay back? We've laid here long enough."

"I should say we had," admitted the crabbed old man, with a look of anguish, as his hand felt of a wallet in his coat. "And expenses going on something frightful all the while. Never mind, I'll take it out of my Nephew Richard's money, that's what I'll do. I hoped we could catch him in Havana. Why didn't you?" and the old man looked reproachfully at those whom he had hired to do the risky work.

"Didn't have no chance," murmured Guy Fletcher. "But we'll get him now."

"I hope so, and end this terrible expense I'm under," went on Mr. Larabee. "Better start the ship, Ike. No use burning coal, and standing still."

With ill-concealed contempt for their employer, the two men went to give the necessary orders, and soon the *Princess* was following Dick's yacht up the harbor. There were so many vessels moving to and fro that there was little danger of detection.

All unconscious of the nearness of his uncle, and the unscrupulous men and youths whom Mr. Larabee had engaged, Dick and his chums went ashore as soon as the *Albatross* was docked.

"Well, it certainly feels good to be on dry land again," remarked Beeby, as he got his camera ready for some snapshots. "I hope I get some good pictures."

"And I hope I find those people I'm searching for," said Dick. "Say, if you fellows will amuse yourselves a bit, I'll look up this other lawyer," he went on. "I guess it will take him about a week to get started, and the sooner I begin the quicker I'll be through."

"I guess we'll have some cocoanut milk for a change," suggested Paul Drew, when Dick had ridden away in a dilapidated carriage, toward the lawyer's office, and the cadet led the others into a place where a specialty was made of cocoanut milk, drawn directly from the fruit, the top of which the clerk sliced off with a big knife, not unlike a *machete* in shape.

"Fine!" gurgled Henry Darby, as the delicious beverage trickled down his throat.

"Dandy!" was the opinion of the others.

They strolled about the city, and after an hour of sightseeing, Beeby proposed that they go down to the dock, where Dick had agreed to meet them on his return from the lawyer's office.

As the lads approached the pier, Henry, who was in the lead, called out:

"Why, there's Dick now, waiting for us."

The others looked, and saw a lad of exactly Dick's build and height gazing at them. And, what is more, his features bore a strong resemblance to those of the young millionaire. But a glance at his clothes showed that they were not such as were worn by our hero.

"That isn't Dick," said Beeby.

"That's so, but it looked an awful sight like him," agreed the young iron merchant, with a laugh. "I beg your pardon," he added, for the youth had seen the attention paid to him.

"Granted, senor," was the reply, and the boys started, for his voice had tones in it resembling Dick's. A nearer view made his features seem even more like those of the young millionaire, but he was darker in complexion. Still, had he worn better clothes, and had he and Dick stood side by side, more than a casual glance would have been needed to distinguish the difference between them, for Dick was almost as dark as a Spaniard or Cuban.

"Dick's double," as the chums dubbed him, moved away, and, soon afterward, our hero appeared. He was amused at the account of some one who looked like him, and said he hoped the unknown would not run up any accounts in the name of Hamilton.

"Well, how did you make out with the lawyer?" asked Paul.

"About the same as with Don Ferdinand Hondora. He says it will take two weeks to make inquiries, and when I tried to cut him down to one he nearly fainted on my hands. But, come on, let's go aboard, and report to Captain Barton."

Dick and his friends spent that evening wandering about the city. They had engaged some carriages to drive them to various points of interest, but, at the last moment, Dick changed the

program, and proposed a visit to the opera house, where a musical comedy was being presented. The boys thoroughly enjoyed the play, and, as they came out with the crowd of pleasure-seekers, they were aware that something unusual was taking place in the street.

There were a number of police officers and soldiers hurrying to and fro, and many commands in excited Spanish were being given, while, in the distance, shots were heard.

"What's it all about? Is there a fire?" asked Henry.

"Maybe it's an extra edition out," suggested Tim Muldoon, hopefully.

"No, somebody walked along in a hurry, and the people can't get over it," declared Beeby.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick of one of the drivers of the carriages he had hired for himself and his chums.

"Kidnapping!" exclaimed the man, who spoke fairly good English.

"Kidnapping!" repeated Dick. "Who was taken?"

"I don't know. Some young fellow, I heard the police say. It seems that some men off a yacht came ashore, and followed him. He ran, and tried to get away, but they took after him, and, just as he got in front of this theatre, they grabbed him, put him in a carriage and drove off. The police rushed up, but——"

"They were too slow," finished Paul, with a laugh.

"But why did they kidnap him?" persisted Dick.

"I do not know. For ransom, perhaps. It is sometimes done. He was a young fellow, and, maybe wealthy, though his dress did not show it. But will the senors be pleased to ride farther with me?"

"Guess we might as well," assented Dick. "A kidnapping, eh? I'd like to hear more about it, and know who the fellow was."

"It will be in the gazette to-morrow—or the next day," said the driver, calmly.

"Yes—always *manana,*" murmured Dick.

"If it was in New York, there'd be an extra out about it by this time," declared Tim, in disgust. "This is a great country—not!"

And Dick and his chums drove back to the yacht, little dreaming what an effect on all of them the kidnapping was to have, and that very soon.

CHAPTER XXII

THE WRONG CAPTIVE

WHILE the police and soldiers of Santiago were hurrying about like mad, trying to find some trace of the kidnappers who had acted so boldly, there might have been seen, driving rapidly down a dark and unfrequented street toward the water-front, a closed carriage. The man on the seat was urging his steeds to faster speed in response to calls from occupants of the coach, which, as the vehicle passed under a dim lamp, could be seen to contain two men and a boy.

"Well, we got away with him all right, Ike," spoke the taller of the two men, as he looked at the youth sitting between them.

"Yes, and he didn't make near as much fuss as I expected. From what happened when we tried it last time, I thought sure he'd put up a stiff fight. And where was his dog, I wonder, Sam?"

"That's right, I didn't see the brute anywhere on shore. But I'm glad of it. Once to feel his teeth is enough. Hurry up there, driver, whatever your name is, or they'll be after us. Old

man Larabee will be glad enough to see us, and get started out to sea again, so keep moving."

"*Si,* senor," answered the driver, and he lashed the horses, though the animals seemed to be doing their best.

"It *is* sort of curious he didn't make more of a fuss," remarked Ike, glancing at the youth huddled up between him and his confederate.

"Maybe he's waiting until he gets a good chance to spring out," suggested Sam, taking a firmer grip on the kidnapped youth.

"He'd better not try it!" fairly growled Ike. "Look here, my wealthy friend," he went on, snarling the words into the ear of the frightened and shrinking youth, "don't try any of your funny tricks now, or my partner and I will be forced to take extreme measures, as they say in the books. We'll do it, too, no matter if your Uncle Ezra did warn us to be careful, and not harm you. You've given us trouble enough, and we won't stand for any more nonsense; will we, Sam?"

"That's right. But he won't have much more chance. We're almost at the pier, and we'll soon be aboard the yacht. Then——"

"Pardon, senors!" exclaimed the lad in the carriage, and then followed a question in rapid Spanish.

"Here, drop that kind of lingo," growled Ike. "We don't understand anything but plain United States talk."

"Pardon, senors," spoke the youth again,

gently, but with an accent of fear in his tones, and this time he used fairly good English. "Pardon, but you are taking me to a yacht; yes?"

"Sure—to your Uncle Ezra," answered Sam.

"I have no Uncle Ezra."

"No Uncle Ezra! Come, that's a good one!" exclaimed Ike. "But I s'pose you're joking. That's why you talked Spanish to us. No Uncle Ezra, eh? Next you'll be telling us your father isn't a millionaire."

"He is not, senors," was the simple answer, and the youth could hardly restrain the sobs in his voice. "I am the son of a poor man, by name—er—Alantrez," and the youth appeared to hesitate. "Why are you taking me away?" he went on. "If it is for ransom, it will be useless, as we are poor—my father and I."

"Poor! Ha! Ha! That's pretty juicy!" chuckled Sam. "I wish I was as poor as you and your father are, kiddo!"

"Same here," added Ike.

"But you have no right to take me away like this," declared the youth, with more spirit. "It is infamous! It is wrong! And when the police hear of it you will suffer."

"We don't care a fig for the police of Cuba!" declared Ike. "We walked away, right under their very noses, with you, and all they did was to rush about, waving their swords and firing their revolvers in the air, like a lot of kids at a

Fourth of July celebration. Police! Huh! We don't worry about them!"

"But what do you want with me?" persisted the lad.

"Haven't I told you that your Uncle Ezra Larabee wants to have a talk with you," said Sam. "He's afraid you're wasting your money, and he wants to sort of supervise it. He claims he has that right, being your mother's brother, as long as your father won't do it."

"You are pleased to speak in riddles, senor," remarked the youth with dignity. "I repeat that I have no Uncle Ezra Larabee. That is no Cuban name. Also, my mother, who is among the saints, she had no brother. Likewise I am not rich—I wish I was. I am only Pedro Alantrez, as I have said."

"Now, don't waste any more words talking like that," suggested Sam Newton. "Do you mean to say you're not Dick Hamilton, the millionaire?"

"Certainly not, senor," declared the youth, with dignity. Just then the carriage approached one of the few street lights. The two men peered forward, and looked full in the face of their captive.

"Well, that's pretty good!" announced Sam. "Take a close look at him, Ike. Isn't he Dick Hamilton?"

"He sure is," was the firm response of Ike Murdock. "I've seen him too often lately, and at close quarters, to be mistaken. But here we are on

the pier. I hope Guy and Simon are waiting with the boat, and we'll soon be away from this half-civilized country."

The carriage came to a stop, after rumbling over the plank flooring of the pier, and the two men alighted, fairly dragging their captive after them. The lad hung back, and a cry of protest and fear came to his lips. Then, seeming to feel that he was called upon to be brave, he drew himself up proudly, and said:

"You need not drag me, senors. I will go with you, but you will regret your action. You are under a great mistake."

"Stow your talk," commanded Ike, roughly. "If we're making a mistake we're getting paid for it, and you needn't be so high and mighty with us. 'Senors' be hanged! Talk English!"

The lad did not answer, but followed his captors, who had him by an arm on either side. Sam flung the driver of the coach some money, and the vehicle rumbled off in the darkness.

"Now, if Guy and Simon are waiting, we'll be all right," murmured Sam. As they approached the stringpiece he gave a cautious whistle, which was answered from a small boat lying out a little distance from the wharf. The craft was rowed in, and a few seconds later the two men with their prisoner were aboard, while Guy Fletcher and Simon Scardale handled the oars, and sent the boat out toward the yacht *Princess*.

"Did you get him?" asked Simon, when they were well out from the shore.

"Sure," answered Sam, "though he says he isn't Dick Hamilton."

"You know *me,* don't you, Dick?" asked Simon, with a sneering laugh.

The captive returned no answer.

As the rowboat approached the yacht, a figure could be seen leaning over the rail—the figure of an old man.

"Did you get him?" he called in a cautious whisper, as the craft came alongside the accommodation ladder.

"Sure thing," answered Ike.

The five were on deck shortly, and Mr. Larabee, approaching the youth who had been kidnapped, said:

"I'm sorry, Nephew Richard, that I had to act this way, but it's for your own good, as you will come to acknowledge in time. It is done to prevent you from making a beggar of yourself. Now, if you will come below, I'll explain my plans to you. My, but I'm glad this chase is over! I had a hard time to get you—me and er—me and these friends of mine. But now I have you, and we'll go back home. Yachting is terribly expensive—terribly!"

With a sigh, the old man led the way to the cabin. The others, including the captive, followed. The latter maintained a grim silence.

In the well-lighted apartment Uncle Ezra

turned to behold his nephew. He looked once, and started. Twice, and he threw up his hands in amazement. Then he cried:

"Land o' Goshen! You've got the wrong boy! What does this mean? This isn't my nephew, Richard Hamilton! You've made a terrible mistake! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Now, I'll be sued for damages!"

"A mistake?" echoed Ike Murdock.

"A mistake?" faltered Sam Newton.

"Mistake?" chorused Guy and Simon.

They all took a good look at the youth whom they had kidnapped. There was no doubt of it. Though he bore a strong resemblance to Dick Hamilton, the lad was unmistakably a Cuban or a Spaniard. He drew himself up proudly and fairly glared at them.

"What did I tell you, senors?" he asked, softly.

"Fooled!" gasped Ike, and, as he spoke, the yacht began to gather headway, for the engineer had orders to get in motion as soon as the party came from offshore.

"We are moving! You are taking me away! where you are. Maybe we did make a mistake," He sprang toward the companionway.

"Easy now," cautioned Sam, roughly. "Stay where you are. "Maybe we did make a mistake," he went on, turning to Mr. Larabee, "but it may be all right, after all. We'll keep this young fellow aboard. I think Ike and I can fix up a scheme that will change matters a bit," and with that he

thrust the young Spaniard into a small room off the cabin, and locked the door. Meanwhile the yacht was increasing her speed, and moving out of the harbor.

CHAPTER XXIII

DICK ON THE TRAIL

THE Santiago papers, the next day, contained a full account of the bold kidnapping, and, with fervid language, described how the scoundrels had spirited the Cuban youth away from under the very noses of the police. Strong and vigorous action was called for, and it was suggested that a reward be offered. There had been too many cases of late, the gazettes stated, where youths had been taken away, and held for ransom.

In this case the object of the kidnappers was likely to fail, the papers stated, as the victim was the son of a poor man—Senor Alantrez—who would be unable to pay any money. Senor Alantrez was a clerk in the government employ, and he and his son were worthy persons, it was said.

"Well, I call that a shame!" exclaimed Dick to his chums, as, seated on the deck of his handsome yacht, he was reading aloud to them the account of the outrage. "The police here ought to get busy, for a fact."

"Is that all there is to it?" asked Beeby.

"No," answered the young millionaire. "There's more. It goes on to say that it is believed that the boy was taken off in the yacht—hello! what's this? Why, fellows, it says that he was taken off in the yacht *Princess,* which recently came here from New York. There was something mysterious about the craft, it states. Mysterious! I should say so. Why, I'll wager a good bit that this is the same yacht they tried to get me aboard of, to rob me!"

"You're right," exclaimed Widdy, who was stumping about the deck, near the boys. "That's her name, Mr. Dick."

"But it might not be the same one," suggested Paul.

"Wait until I read a bit further," said Dick. "Yes," he went on, "it says that men from the yacht were seen in several places about town yesterday and last night. And the description of them tallies with those two men who followed me about in New York."

"You don't think they tried to kidnap you, do you?" asked Henry Darby.

"Not a bit of it," answered the young millionaire. "I think they were just ordinary thieves, but I also think that they might attempt a more desperate game down here. Probably they are the same fellows, who took a trip in their yacht to see what luck they would have in Cuba. Then they decided to try kidnapping, as the paper states there have been several cases of it lately. Only

they happened to get the wrong lad—one with no money—instead of a rich chap."

"Yes, they would have done better to have picked up you," remarked Frank Bender. "But, when they find out their mistake, they'll let this Pedro Alantrez go, I guess."

"Sure," agreed Dick, "and it will be a good joke on them. I hope they are caught and punished."

They discussed the kidnapping further, wondering if it would be of any service to the police for Dick to tell what he suspected of the men—namely, that they had followed him in New York.

"I think I would," suggested Beeby. "I'll go ashore with you, and we'll call on the police. We'll tell 'em what you know, and I can get some good snapshots of the officers, maybe."

"Oh, you and your snapshots!" exclaimed Dick, good-naturedly. "You'll be taking your own picture next, Beeby. But I think your proposition is a good one. Fellows, let's go ashore. Widdy, have the launch gotten ready; will you?"

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the wooden-legged sailor, and soon the young millionaire and his chums were scudding toward the landing dock.

While the others rode about the city in carriages which Dick hired, the young yacht owner and Beeby were driven to the office of the chief of police. Dick's reputation as a master of money had preceded him, and he was ushered into the private room with no little ceremony. He told his

suspicions of the men who had taken part in the kidnapping, and received the thanks of the official, who said he would communicate with the police of New York, toward which city the scoundrels were undoubtedly bound.

As Dick came out of the chief's private room he saw, standing at the desk of one of the lieutenants of police, a man who seemed greatly affected. He was evidently under some poignant grief or sorrow.

"And you say there is no news?" he asked in Spanish, which language Dick understood slightly. "They have taken my boy out to sea! Oh, my poor son! Why can not a boat be had to follow the scoundrels?"

"Because there is no boat available," answered the lieutenant. "We would gladly accommodate you, Senor Alántrez, but it is impossible."

"That is the father of the boy who was kidnapped," said the chief, in a low tone to Dick. "He will be glad to meet you, and to know that you have given us some information that may prove valuable. Come, if you like; I will present him to you, Senor Hamilton."

"Very well," assented Dick, and he was shortly shaking hands with the grief-stricken parent.

"Do you think there is any chance of catching the villains?" asked Senor Alantrez of Dick, in fairly good English. The man seemed nervous and anxious for some one to give him hope.

"Yes, I think they'll get them," declared the

young millionaire. "When those men find out that your son is not—er—not as—" Dick hesitated. He did not wish to embarrass the father by referring to him as poor.

"Do not be afraid to speak it, senor," said Mr. Alantrez, with a sad smile. "Poverty and I have been close friends, of late, though we were not always such. I am poor, and I am glad, for now the scoundrels may the sooner return my son to me. If there was but a fast boat to be had, we would give chase to them. But there is none to be secured without much money, and I, alas, have none. So I must wait; but it is hard! My poor boy!"

Dick's face shone with a sudden light, and his eyes brightened. He took a step forward.

"Would you like to get a boat, and take a cruise after those men who have your son?" he asked.

"Ah, senor, it would give me the utmost happiness! But why ask me? I can get no boat."

"Yes, you can," cried the young millionaire. "I wonder I didn't think of it before. My yacht, the *Albatross,* is at your disposal, Senor Alantrez! If you will be my guest we'll get up steam at once, and trail after those villains! I'd ask nothing better than to run them down!" and Dick's eyes sparkled with righteous anger. "They tried to injure me, and I'd be glad of a chance to get back at them. Come, senor, we'll start at once, if you are ready, and I think we can overtake the *Princess,* though she has a good start."

"Oh, I can never thank you enough, senor!" cried the father, seizing Dick's hand, and attempting, in his warm, Spanish way, to kiss it, only the lad drew it quickly away. "I am your debtor for life!" he cried.

"Wait until we see if we catch those fellows," spoke Dick, as he led the way from the police station, followed by Senor Alantrez, and Beeby, who had been busy taking several snapshots.

The chief of police and his lieutenant shrugged their shoulders.

"These Americanos!" murmured the chief. "They are always in such a hurry. To-morrow would have done as well."

But Dick, hurrying toward his yacht, with the now hopeful father, waited for no to-morrows. He was going to get on the trail at once.

CHAPTER XXIV

OFF FOR STONE ISLAND

DICK'S chums, when they returned to the yacht, after waiting in vain for him at the plaza, where the band played, and where he had promised to meet them, were surprised to see him in earnest conversation with a Spanish gentleman on the deck of the *Albatross*.

"Well, we've been looking everywhere for you, Dick," said Paul Drew. "We were beginning to be afraid you had been kidnapped."

"The saints forbid!" cried the Cuban, fervently and earnestly.

"Come here and meet a friend of mine," invited Dick, and, when the lads crowded up, he presented them to Senor Alantrez—that is, all save Beeby, who, having accompanied Dick to the police station, was already acquainted with the father of the kidnapped lad.

"We are going to sea once more, fellows," announced the young millionaire. "We're going to chase after those kidnappers."

"But what about the search you came here to

make?" suggested Paul Drew, in low tones. "Aren't you going to look for your mother's relatives?"

"Yes, but I've got the lawyer doing that. He can accomplish all that I can, and more too, only not so quickly. It will be two weeks before he has any definite news for me, and, in the meanwhile, I don't want to stay tied up to a dock. I want to be doing something."

"That's Dick Hamilton, all the way through," murmured Henry Darby.

"So I proposed to Senor Alantrez that we give chase to these villains, and we're going to," went on the young millionaire. "We'll start as soon as we have taken some coal aboard and some more provisions, and that can't be until to-morrow morning, I'm sorry to say. But we are a faster boat than is the *Princess,* and we may be able to overtake her, even if she has a start of us."

"Where will you look for her?" asked Frank Bender.

"Oh, along the route to New York. I think they'll head for there, or, maybe they'll come back, when they find out their mistake."

"The saints grant that they may," murmured the father. "Oh, if I can see my boy again, unharmed, I will be happy forever!"

"We'll get him," promised Dick, firmly. "We'll get him, or twist off the propeller!"

Dick hurried all he could the coaling of the yacht, but even his utmost efforts were of little

avail. The laborers were not in the habit of exerting themselves, and they took the usual time. Captain Barton did manage to get the stores and provisions aboard sooner than he expected, but taking on coal was a slow and unpleasant task.

At length, however, it was finished, and Dick, having left word with the Santiago lawyer that he might be gone on the search for several days, prepared to sail. Captain Barton had taken counsel with some local pilots as to the best plan for their cruise, and had secured considerable information about a number of islands, and dangerous reefs in the neighborhood of the coast off Santiago.

Senor Alantrez readily obtained leave from the government office, where he was employed, to be away for as long as was necessary, and, on the second morning after the kidnapping, Dick, with his friends, and the father of the missing lad, stood on deck, and gave the order to cast off.

"And when we come back, I hope we'll have your son, and also those scoundrels who took him away," said our hero to the grief-stricken father.

As the yacht was slowly moving away from the dock, a boy was seen running down the pier, waving something over his head. It looked like a letter, and he was shouting at the top of his voice.

"There's some one for you, Mr. Dick," said Widdy, who was smoking his pipe near the after companionway.

"Wait, we must see what that is," called the youthful yacht owner. "Perhaps it's a note from the police about the kidnappers."

Captain Barton swung the indicator over to half-speed astern, and the craft's way was checked. The boy with the letter came on faster.

"Wonderful!" cried Beeby, as he saw the speed the lad was making. "I must get a snapshot of him. I have really lived to see some one in Cuba in a hurry! I must make a picture of it, or no one will believe me when I tell them."

He focused his camera on the lad, who, seeing the glistening glass point at him, ducked, and would have run back.

"Stop it!" commanded Dick, with a laugh. "Wait until he delivers that letter, Beeby, and then you can snap him going back. He's afraid to come on."

The cadet put his camera out of sight, and the boy advanced again.

"Is Senor Alantrez on board?" he asked in Spanish.

"Yes, yes, I am here! What is it? Is my boy found? Is it news from the scoundrels who carried him away?" and the father was trembling in his eagerness.

"It came to the office for you," explained the boy, "and they hurried me down here with it. It arrived through the mail, senor."

With a skilful flip of his fingers he sent the envelope scaling on deck, like a miniature aeroplane.

Dick tossed the lad some coins, and, picking them up, he ran back up the pier as if some one was after him.

"Quick, Beeby!" called Paul, "if you want a snapshot, now's your chance."

"Now he's in *too* much of a hurry," objected the cadet, as he snapped his camera at the fleeing lad. "Wonderful to relate, he's entirely too quick for me."

Senor Alantrez was reading his letter. As he finished it he uttered a cry, and extended the missive to Dick.

"It is news of my boy!" he exclaimed joyously. "The scoundrels have given him up. Oh, the saints be praised! Now, we can get him—if only he is unharmed. See—read, Senor Hamilton!"

The note was brief, and was written in English, which Senor Alantrez was familiar with. Dick perused it:

"Senor Alantrez," the letter began. "We regret having been the cause of annoying you, but it was not altogether our fault. We made a mistake. We did not mean to kidnap your son. We wish to restore him to you unharmed, but we do not care, for obvious reasons, to venture back to Santiago. Therefore, we have taken this plan: We will leave your son on a small island, called Stone Island, where you can call for him at your leisure. He will be provided with sufficient food and water to last two weeks, and, in addition, there is food to be had on the place. He will not

suffer, as the weather is warm, and there are natural shelters on Stone Island. Regretting the trouble we have caused you, at the same time assuring you that it was unintentional, we beg to remain unknown to you, except as

"THE KIDNAPPERS."

"Well, what do you think of that?" cried Beeby, when Dick had read the letter aloud.

"Talk about nerve!" exclaimed Paul.

"What'll you do?" asked Tim Muldoon.

"Do, why the best thing is to go to Stone Island," decided Dick, promptly. "This letter may be a fake, but it sounds genuine. Anyhow, it won't be much out of our way to call there; will it, Captain Barton?"

"No," announced the commander, after consulting his charts, and some memoranda given him by a Santiago pilot. "Stone Island is a small one, rather isolated, to be sure, and not near any others. It is about a hundred miles south of the Laberinto de doce Leguas group of keys, which are themselves only a few miles from Key Grande and Key Caballones, two rather large islands. I think we can pick up Stone Island, all right."

"Then we'll do it!" cried Dick. "This letter came in the nick of time. We'll rescue your son, Senor Alantrez, and do it as soon as steam can take us there. I hope we find him all right, though he may be a bit lonesome from his Robinson Crusoe existence."

"Oh, my poor boy! But he is brave! Once he

is out of the hands of those scoundrels, all will be well!"

"It's the only move they could make," said Dick, reflectively, "for they knew they would be arrested if they set foot on Cuban soil. Now, to the rescue! Let her go, Captain Barton!" and once more the yacht gathered headway, and was soon on her way to Stone Island.

CHAPTER XXV

DICK'S YACHT IS GONE

As MAY well be imagined, there was, at the start of this voyage, more excitement aboard the *Albatross* than at any time since the eventful cruise had been begun, save, perhaps, during the time when it was thought that Tim Muldoon was drowned. Dick was eager to make speed to the island where the kidnapped youth was said to be, and, after that, he had it in mind to chase after the kidnappers, if he could get a clew to their whereabouts. This, however, he feared would be difficult.

As for Captain Barton, and the others, they, too, were all as anxious as was the owner of the yacht to effect the rescue, and, as the craft sailed over the heaving ocean, the boys talked of little else as the hours passed, save what would happen when they found the marooned youth.

Senor Alantrez took up his position near the bows, peering eagerly forward, as if to get the first glimpse of the lonely island where his son was supposed to be. The yacht, though it was making good time, seemed to him barely to be crawling through the water.

But, after the first day of travel, matters settled down more into the usual routine, though the subdued air of excitement and expectancy was never absent.

"Well," remarked Innis Beeby one morning, as he got up from the breakfast table, "I think I'll take a few snapshots."

"For the love of a celluloid film, Beeby!" exclaimed Dick, "is there anything on board that you haven't snapshotted? If there is, name it, and I'll make you a present of it as a souvenir."

"Well, I haven't been able to get a picture of Grit and Gritty together," answered the stout cadet. "They won't stand still long enough. Every time I think I have them posed, the pup makes a nip at Grit's ear, or tail, and then they mix it up in a make-believe fight, and it's all off."

"Why don't you take 'em as they're playing," suggested Paul. "Make a sort of moving picture."

"By Jove! I never thought of that," said Beeby. "I'll do it," and he hurried off to get his camera.

Dick was busy for the next few minutes, talking to Captain Barton, but his attention was suddenly taken by a series of howls and yells, mingled with barks and growls, coming from the main deck.

"By Jinks!" Dick exclaimed, as he ran up the companionway, "I guess Grit is after Hans again."

He was just in time to see his bulldog shaking

something in his strong jaws, while Beeby, who had arisen from a sprawling position on the deck, was crying out:

"Here, Grit, old fellow, give it to me! That's a good dog! Don't smash it, now! Come on, old fellow. I didn't mean you any harm; honest, I didn't!"

Grit only growled the harder, and shook more vigorously the object he held.

"What's he got?" asked Dick.

"My camera," replied the fleshy lad. "I was taking a snapshot of him, sitting alone—the first chance I had at him—but when he heard the shutter click, I guess he must have imagined I was trying to poison him. He made a jump for me, and——"

"Did he bite you?" asked the young millionaire, anxiously.

"No, he only grabbed the camera away from me, and now he's trying to make splinters of it. Drop it, Grit, I say!"

But the bulldog, growling and snarling, never heeded.

"Here, Grit!" called Dick in a low voice. "Bring it here!" The dog obeyed instantly, and the camera, rather the worse for wear, as Paul said, was laid on the deck.

"Here it is—guess it isn't hurt much," observed Dick. "If it is, I'll get you a new one, Beeby, and you can sell that to Henry Darby, for old scrap iron and leather."

"Humph! It looks pretty well chewed," spoke Beeby, "but I guess it's all right. I hope he didn't shake it so hard that he fogged the film."

"Maybe he took some views on his own account," suggested Frank Bender.

"I'm going to develop the roll and find out," declared the fat youth, and he came back presently from the improvised dark room, to report that the only good picture on the strip of film was the one of Grit. It had been taken just before the dog sprang, and was a characteristic likeness.

Several days passed, with good weather to make the cruise more enjoyable. Senor Alantrez maintained his watch for the first glimpse of Stone Island, the others taking observations now and again through the powerful glasses.

It was toward the close of a warm, lazy afternoon, when Dick and his chums were sitting on deck, under an awning, sipping iced lemonade and eating some thin crackers which the steward served to them, that from the lookout in the crow's nest, at the forward mast, there came a cry:

"Land ho!"

"Where away?" demanded Captain Barton.

"Dead ahead!"

"Then, that must be what we are looking for," went on the commander. "I thought it was about time we picked it up."

Dick sent for the glasses, and, taking an observation through them, reported that he could

see a low-lying island, which bore a resemblance to the description given them of the lonely land whither they were bound.

"And oh, if only my son proves to be there!" exclaimed the anxious father.

"Let's make a little more speed," suggested Dick, "and we can anchor, plenty of time before night."

The engine room telegraph gave the necessary order, and the yacht slipped through the water more quickly. The island loomed up larger, and, though Dick and his chums could see it plainly now, through the binoculars, there was no sign of life about it.

"Maybe it's only a blind trail they sent us on, after all," suggested Paul.

"I'll not believe that, until we've landed and made a search," cried Dick.

In another hour the *Albatross* had dropped anchor in a quiet little bay, where there was good holding ground, and sufficient depth of water. They could get a partial view of the island now. It was possibly five miles long, and about half as broad, with a very much broken and indented shore-line, as far as could be seen. There appeared to be a heavy growth of vegetation on the place, which was partly of coral formation, but from the bay, where the yacht was anchored, no very good view could be obtained. The centre of the land was high and rocky, showing evidences of volcanic formation.

"Well, we're here!" cried Dick, as the *Albatross* swung around with the current. "Now to go ashore and find your son, Senor Alantrez!"

"And may that be speedily!" exclaimed the father. "I can not thank you enough, Senor Hamilton, for bringing me here; I am ever your debtor!"

"Nonsense!" cried Dick, who did not relish praise. "Any one would have done as much as I have. Get the launch ready, Mr. Midwell, if you please, and we'll go ashore."

"Who are going?" asked Paul.

"Well, I thought we fellows would all go," said Dick, "and Senor Alantrez, of course. Then I'll take Widdy to help with the boat, and that will be enough. Unless you want to come, Captain Barton."

"It's not necessary, unless you think you'll need help. I don't like the looks of the weather, and I should prefer to stay by the ship, when I'm on an unknown island coast."

"Oh, I don't fear anything from those kidnappers," said Dick. "They've probably gone long ago, leaving the young man here alone. We'll very likely find him on the other side of the island. Perhaps it will be as well for you to stay on board, however, captain. Come on, fellows."

"Yes, don't lose any time," advised the commander. "I'd like to get plenty of sea room, if it comes on to blow, as seems likely now."

The gasolene launch was quickly awaiting the

young millionaire, and his guests, at the foot of the accommodation ladder, and soon, with Widdy at the steering wheel, Dick and the other five young men were on their way ashore. They found an easy, sandy beach on which to land, and, taking the kedge anchor of the launch well up on shore, to prevent the tide from floating off the craft, they all started inland to look for the kidnapped youth. Grit and the puppy raced on ahead, gamboling over the sands, and glad enough to be on shore again.

"Which way shall we go?" asked Dick.

"To the right," decided Paul.

"Looks like a better place off to the left," came from Beeby.

"If I might advise," remarked Widdy, "I'd make for the high ground. Then you can get a view over the island, an' see if there is a signal shown anywhere, or some sort of a place where he might live."

"Good idea!" cried Dick; "we'll do it! Come on, fellows! Come on, Senor Alantrez!"

Forward they went, climbing the rough, high land in the centre of the island. It was no easy task to mount to the summit, and, when they were near it, Dick, who was in the lead, called:

"Quiet, everybody! I hear some one coming!"

There was a sound of crackling underbrush, and of tree branches pushed to one side.

"Maybe it's an animal," suggested Paul. "I brought one of your rifles, Dick."

"Good! Have it in readiness, though it walks more like a person than an animal."

The sounds suddenly ceased.

"Maybe it's some of the kidnappers," came from Beeby. "If I get a chance I'll snapshot 'em, and we can use the pictures for evidence. I——"

Beeby didn't have a chance to finish. A moment later there was a sudden cry of joy, and a figure burst through the fringe of underbrush. Right toward Senor Alantrez it sprang, and Paul, who had half-raised the rifle, lowered it, for he saw that the figure was that of a youth.

"Padre! Padre!" shouted the lad, and then in rapid Spanish he greeted his father.

"My son! My son!" cried Senor Alantrez, in delight. "I have really found you! The dear saints be praised! Heaven has been good to me!" and father and son were clasped in each other's arms, while Dick and his chums felt the moisture come into their eyes, and they found something exceedingly interesting to look at in the other direction. The two Cubans embraced warmly, held each other off at arms' length, as if to make sure there was no mistake, and then clasped each other close again, all the while murmuring endearing terms in their own tongue.

"But I forget myself!" exclaimed the elder Cuban at length. "Pedro, here is our benefactor —yours and mine—but for him, you would never have been found. Kiss his hand!"

"No, you don't!" cried Dick, who was not used

to such things. "I don't want to be thanked. I've been thanked enough. If I hadn't come here for you some one else would. But I'm glad you're all right, Pedro Alantrez. Did those scoundrels treat you badly?"

"No, it was all a curious mistake, and, as soon as they discovered it, they set me ashore here, and said my father would be told where to come for me. I have been waiting two days. I have not suffered, save from loneliness. I erected a signal on the other side of the island, and I was crossing to put one up over here, when, as I was walking along, I heard voices. I grew afraid. I hid, but when I peered out, and saw you, I knew it was all right. Oh, padre, how happy I am!"

"Well, we're glad, too," spoke Dick, "but as it's growing late, and as Captain Barton says a storm is coming up, suppose we return to the yacht. I fancy you have had enough of this place, Pedro?"

"Too much, Senor Hamilton. I shall be glad to leave it."

They turned to make their way down the slope. It was getting late, though there was still plenty of light. They had been out of sight of the yacht and launch for some time, as the bay where they had landed was on a curve, and trees hid it from view.

As they came down to the beach, where they should have had a glimpse of the launch, Dick rubbed his eyes, took a second look, and cried out:

"Fellows, we're not sailors. The launch has been carried away by the tide!"

"Carried away by the tide?" repeated Widdy, wonderingly, as he stumped forward. "It couldn't be! She was well fastened, and the kedge anchor was out of reach of high water."

"But she's gone!" declared Dick.

"Maybe we're at the wrong place," suggested Paul.

"This is where we landed," insisted Henry.

"It sure is," agreed Beeby. "I remember it, for I took a picture of the launch as it was drawn up on the beach, and I stood near this big shell," and he pointed to one of peculiar formation.

"Then Captain Barton must have come ashore and got the boat," said Frank Bender.

Dick glanced across the bay. There was a wide expanse of water, but nothing was visible on it. A cry of fear and wonder came to his lips.

"Fellows!" he exclaimed, "my yacht is also gone!"

"Gone?" echoed the others.

Silently Dick pointed to the place where the *Albatross* had been anchored. There was no mistaking it, for the craft had been just opposite where the launch landed. But the yacht was not there, and a rapid survey of the shore in both directions did not disclose either her or the launch.

"Fellows, we're marooned on this island!" spoke Dick, solemnly.

CHAPTER XXVI

MAROONED

For a few moments after Dick had spoken his companions hardly realized the import of what he said. It came rather as a shock to them, following the disappearance of the launch and yacht.

Senor Alantrez and his son looked at each other, not quite understanding, for, though they spoke English fairly well, the talk of the young millionaire and his chums had been so rapid and excited that the two foreigners had not gathered the full meaning of what was said.

"Is it that the steamer has gone, but will return presently?" asked the elder Cuban of Dick.

"It's gone—that's sure," was the reply, "but whether it will come back or not——" the lad shrugged his shoulders, a Spanish trick he had acquired lately.

"What does it all mean?" asked Beeby. "Is the yacht really gone, Dick?"

"Do you see it anywhere?" inquired the young millionaire in his turn, and he swept his hand toward the ocean. "If you do, you have better

eyes than I. And the launch seems to have disappeared also."

"But I can't understand it," put in Paul.

"I guess it's as Frank said," remarked Henry Darby. "The captain saw a storm coming up, and came to get the launch. Then he put out to sea."

"He wouldn't do it, and leave us marooned on this island, with nothing to eat," declared Dick, positively. "No, fellows, there's something queer and mysterious about this. Either the yacht and launch suddenly sank, which is out of the question, or they were taken away. Pedro Alantrez," he went on, turning quickly to the young Cuban, "did those kidnappers, who landed you here, go away?"

"As far as I know, they did, Senor Hamilton," was the answer. "They anchored about where you say your yacht was, and brought me ashore in a small boat, with some food. Then they rowed back, got up steam, and sailed away, leaving me all alone."

"Did you think those men might have stolen your yacht, Dick?" asked Beeby.

"I was beginning to think so—in fact, I was sure of it, but if they went away I don't see how they could. They would hardly stay around, after sending word to Senor Alantrez that his son was here, knowing, as they must have, that he would come to get him. It wouldn't be safe for them. No, they probably have gone, but there may be

Cuban pirates, or some other criminals, on this island, who sneaked around when we were inland, and took the launch and yacht."

"But they'd have to overpower Captain Barton and the crew to do such a thing," objected Frank Bender.

"Well, that's possible," argued Dick, "especially if they sneaked up on the *Albatross* in the launch. Captain Barton and the others, seeing the yacht's launch approach, wouldn't suspect anything until it was too late. I'm afraid something serious may have happened to them. Did you notice any signs of pirates, or other desperate characters, on the island since you have been here?" asked Dick, of the young Cuban.

"No, senor, but then I did not explore this place much. I was too full of grief. I merely erected a signal on the other side of the island, and was coming to do the same here, when I met you."

There was silence for a few minutes, while the grim, dismal fact that they were marooned on a lonely and seldom-visited island, sank deeper into the minds of the young millionaire and his chums. They gazed helplessly across the stretch of ocean, which was fast becoming covered with a haze, added to which the falling darkness made it impossible to make out objects more than a short distance away.

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Beeby at

length, and he emitted a sigh. "If we've got to stay here all night, we'd better do something."

"We'll probably have to stay here for several nights and days," declared Dick. "Fellows, we're up against it. I think the first thing to be done is to go to some high point—the highest on the island—and see if we can get a glimpse of the yacht. It can't have gotten out of sight so quickly."

"Maybe not, but by the time we get to the high point, it'll be so dark we can't see anything," put in Widdy, who had said little since the astonishing discovery was made. "If I might say something, Mr. Dick, I'd say the best thing to do would be to find a shelter for the night, as it's cold an' damp when the sun goes down."

"It's about down now," replied the young millionaire. "But, you're right, Widdy, we do need shelter."

"And something to eat," added Beeby. "What about that, Dick? I'm hungry!"

"Don't think of it," advised Paul.

"I can't help it, when I remember all the good things on board the yacht," went on the fat cadet. "The chicken, the roast beef, the soups, the pies and cakes that Hans used to make—the omelets, and——"

"Cut it out!" yelled Frank. "Do you want us all to die of indigestion?"

"Not much danger," put in Dick, with a grim

laugh. "But let's take a vote on what to do. Where shall we spend the night?"

"At a moving picture show, or a comic opera," said Tim Muldoon, with a laugh.

"That's right, jolly us up a bit," cried Dick. "We need it. But it's going to be serious enough later on."

"Pardon, senors," spoke the young Cuban, "but of the food which the kidnappers left me there is still a considerable quantity left, and the few days I was alone here I made a sort of shelter on the other side of the island. If we hasten we can get to it before dark, and spend the night there. It is better than on this side of the island."

"Fine!" cried Dick. "Why didn't you say something about that before, Pedro?"

"I did not like to interrupt the senors," was the lad's gentle answer. "But the food is not very choice, and there is not much of it."

"It'll have to do," declared the wealthy lad. "Come on, fellows, for a walk over the hill to the other shore. We'll make-believe we're on a practice march, Paul and Beeby."

"Sure," agreed the fat cadet, "only let it be more practice than march, if you please, for my feet are sore."

They started off, retracing their course in the same direction as when they had looked for the kidnapped lad. Dick led the way, with Grit coursing along at his heels, while Widdy carried

Gritty, the puppy, whose short legs got tangled up in the underbrush.

They reached the other shore just as dusk fell, and there saw a mass of leaves and branches which the Spanish lad had piled into a rude sort of shelter. He showed them where he had stored the canned stuff which his captors had left for him.

"Why, that isn't so bad," announced Dick, as he saw the food supply.

"Is there any fresh water?" asked Tim Muldoon. "I'm as dry as a fish!"

"There is a good spring near here," announced Pedro.

"Then we'll build a fire and camp out!" declared Paul. "Being marooned isn't so bad, after all; eh Dick?"

"Maybe not," agreed the young millionaire, as he helped the others gather fuel for the fire.

Soon a cheerful blaze was roaring on the beach, fed by pieces of driftwood which Widdy brought from various points. The leaping flames illuminated the place, and cast dancing, fantastic shadows of the little party upon the sands.

"Frank, you get some water," ordered Dick, "and then see what you can find to boil it in. Pedro says they left him some coffee."

"Yes, and a few cooking utensils," added the Cuban. "I think there is also a coffee pot."

"Good!" cried Dick. "Beeby, drop your camera

and get busy. What do you think I'm paying you for—to pose as a living picture?"

"I was going to take a snapshot of the fire," pleaded the fat lad.

"Make a snapshot of yourself bringing up more wood," ordered Dick, with a laugh. "We'll need it before morning. Tim, you and Paul and Henry get busy on enlarging the shelter. There is quite an addition to your family, Pedro, since last night."

"Yes, but there will be room for all," said the elder Cuban, cheerfully. Nothing mattered to him, now that his son was found.

And so the marooned party, gathered about the fire, took a happier view of their situation as they bustled about, trying to get something to eat, while Widdy piled the wood on the blaze, and the two dogs played about in the sand, as if the whole affair was arranged for their especial benefit.

CHAPTER XXVII

DICK FINDS HIS RELATIVES

IT CAN NOT be said that the supper was a very elaborate one. They ate canned corned beef and crackers, and drank coffee from clam shells and empty tin cans, but Dick said it tasted as good, if not better, than the most complete meal Hans, the cook, had ever served to them on the yacht.

"It sure does," agreed Beeby, with a sigh of satisfaction. "I'll have a little more of that fricasseed corned-beef on toast, with a bit of mushroom sauce on the side, if you don't mind, old man," and he passed his clam shell to Dick.

"You'll have nothing of the kind," announced the young millionaire, peering into the frying pan, in which the beef had been warmed, "for the simple reason, Beeby, that it's all gone."

"Ah, a very good and sufficient reason," admitted the stout cadet. "Then I'll fill up on water. There's plenty of that."

They sat about the campfire after the meal, discussing over and over again the strange disappearance of the launch and yacht, but being un-

able to come to any conclusion regarding the matter. Dick's theory, that some criminals (who were either concealed on the island, or who had been on their craft, hidden in some bay) had sneaked out to the yacht when the young millionaire and his chums were prospecting inland, was generally accepted.

"But what can we do about it?" asked Henry Darby, who was intensely practical.

"We'll think of that in the morning," decided Dick, who was both worried and tired. He knew their situation was desperate, for the food supply was very limited, and he dared not think what would happen when it was all gone. And, in a measure, he felt a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the whole party. "Let's get under shelter now," went on the young yacht owner. "It's getting damp and chilly from the dew. In the morning we'll make a better shelter, see what there is on this island to eat, and put up some signals. It will probably be only a short time before we can be taken off by some ship." But, though he spoke thus hopefully, Dick was far from feeling the confidence with which he wished to inspire his companions.

The night under the flimsy shelter would have been uncomfortable to a degree had not the faithful Widdy replenished the fire at frequent intervals. Indeed, he scarcely seemed to sleep, but was up and about all night, piling on wood, and making a roaring blaze the genial heat of which

penetrated to the bower where Dick and the others were stretched out on the ground, endeavoring to get a little rest.

Widdy constituted himself cook, and the first sight that greeted the eyes of Dick when he crawled out the next morning, rather sore and stiff, from his uncomfortable bed, was the old seaman, stumping around on the sand, making coffee over the campfire.

"My, but that smells good!" cried the young millionaire.

"Just tell the steward to serve mine in my stateroom this morning, will you, old chap?" drawled Beeby. "I think I'll lie abed a bit longer."

"Yes, you will!" cried Paul Drew, and, with a shove of his foot, he sent the fat lad rolling out of the bower, and over the sloping sand toward the waves.

" 'Up, up, Lucy, the sun is up, and we must be up, too,' as it used to say in the school books," cried Dick, gaily. "We've got lots to do to-day, fellows, and we'd better get at it. So, after some coffee and rolls—we'll omit the omelet this morning, because—ahem!—because the hens seem to be off on their vacation—but after some coffee and hard-tack we'll get busy. We must set up some signals of distress, erect a better shelter, see what food we have on hand, look to see what there is to be gotten here, and take another look at the place from where the launch disappeared.

Maybe we can discover some clews. Come on, tumble out, everybody!"

"Me for a dip in the briny!" cried Paul, and, stripping to his undergarments, he ran down the beach, and was soon splashing about. The others followed his example, with the exception of Widdy and Senor Alantrez, and when the lads came back, glowing from their bath, they found a table set on the sands—a primitive table, with tin cans for cups, and shells for plates. But no coffee ever tasted better, as they sat around in negligee costumes and drank it, for the weather was warm enough to permit of light attire.

"Now, fellows, here's the program, as I see it," said Dick, when the meal was finished. "Senor Alantrez, his son and I will go over to the other side of the island and erect some sort of a distress signal. We will also take a look around while there. Widdy, you and Henry Darby and Tim Muldoon can get busy and make a better shelter. You have pocket-knives, and can cut branches when you can't break 'em. Paul, you and Beeby take a stroll around, and see if there is anything to eat on this place. Take the rifle, which you were lucky enough to bring with you, Paul, and if you can pot a brace of quail or a roast turkey, so much the better."

"And I'll take some pictures," added Beeby.

"Yes, it will keep you out of mischief," declared Dick, smiling. "Now we all have something to do."

"Aye, aye, Captain Hamilton!" exclaimed Paul, with a left-handed salute. "Your orders shall be obeyed."

"I wish I had some sort of a hatchet with which to cut a tree to stick down near the beach for a signal pole," went on Dick.

"The kidnappers left me one, but it's not very sharp," said Pedro Alantrez, as he brought it forth.

"It'll have to do," observed the young millionaire. "Now, come on. We'll be back to dinner, fellows, so be sure to have a good one ready," he added, as he and the two Spaniards started across the island.

When the wealthy youth and his companions reached the high ground in the middle of the place, they looked long and earnestly across the waste of waters, but there was no sign of the yacht, nor any other vessel. Dick could not help sighing, as he started to ascend the slope.

"I regret, senor, that you have suffered so much on my account," spoke Pedro, softly. "Your fine yacht is gone."

"But I'll get it back!" declared Dick, with anger in his eyes. "It wasn't your fault at all—I'm only too glad that we came here for you."

They made a careful examination of the beach upon which the launch had been hauled when the party went ashore, but no clews could be had. The tide had washed away most of the footprints, and those that were left were so intermingled that

it could not be told whether they had been made by Dick and his chums, or by strangers who landed, took away the launch and thus reached the yacht.

"Well, we'll put up a signal, and leave a note in some stones at the foot of the pole, telling any rescue party that may land, to come to the other side of the island," proposed Dick. "And there's another thing—what shall I make the signal of?"

"We'll have to use some of our clothing," suggested Senor Alantrez. "I can spare my vest."

"I guess we all can," said Dick. "We don't need 'em in this climate, and three vests, fluttering from a flagstaff, will attract attention almost anywhere."

They cut down a tall, slender tree, tied their vests to it, one below the other, and then, digging a hole in the sand with the hatchet, well above high-water mark, they set up the pole. The signal showed conspicuously.

"Now, that's done, we'll take a walk along the beach before we go back," proposed Dick. "Maybe we can find some clams or some crabs to eat. Well, this is certainly a change from what I was doing yesterday. By the way, Pedro, how did you come to be kidnapped, anyhow. I meant to have you tell us, but so many other things happened that I overlooked it. Did you get any clew to who the men were?"

"I was just going to speak about it myself,"

said the young Cuban. "I meant to last night, for I think you are much concerned in it."

"I am concerned in it?"

"Yes."

"How is that?" asked Dick, wonderingly.

"Because I was kidnapped by a man named Ezra Larabee, and the men he hired to take me away thought they were taking a certain Dick Hamilton."

"My Uncle Ezra here? He wanted to kidnap me? They took you for me?" gasped Dick, wondering whether he had heard aright.

"Yes. You and I strongly resemble each other," went on the Spanish youth.

"I know that," assented Dick, "but—my uncle here—trying to kidnap me? It seems incredible. What vessel did he have?"

"The *Princess.*"

"Ha! Then it *was* the same one on which they tried to decoy me while in New York. I begin to see through some things," cried Dick. "Those men—the two who attacked me—they were kidnappers instead of thieves, as I thought. But I never suspected Uncle Ezra, though he did bitterly oppose me in this yachting business. But what can be his object? Is he crazy?"

"He is possessed with an idea that you must be prevented from wasting your money," answered Pedro. "I gathered that much while a captive on the *Princess.* He wants to kidnap you for your own good, he says."

"Then he must have gone insane. To think of taking you for me!"

"Yes, your uncle was very much put out over the mistake the men and boys made," said Pedro.

"Boys—were there boys aboard the *Princess?*" asked Dick.

"Guy Fletcher and Simon Scardale," answered the Spaniard.

"Guy and Simon? Worse and more of it!" cried Dick. "But how did my uncle happen to get in with them—how did he get away down to Cuba?"

"It seems that he followed you from New York," went on Pedro, who had overheard considerable during his captivity. "He knew you were coming to Cuba to look up some distant relatives."

"That's right, so I did, but I don't seem to be able to locate them," said the young millionaire. "I am looking for some relatives of my dear mother—their names are Miguel and Raphael Valdez, but they seem to have disappeared."

"Miguel and Raphael Valdez?" gasped Senor Alantrez, springing to his feet. "Are you searching for *them,* Senor Hamilton?"

"I am, but I've about given up. They are not to be found, and I'm sorry, for mother wished to have them aided if they were in want. Besides their signatures are needed to important papers. However, if I can't locate them——"

"They *are* to be found!" cried the elderly Cuban.

"Where?" asked Dick, eagerly.

"Here," replied Senor Alantrez, with a dramatic gesture. "Allow me to make known to you the identity of myself and my son. I am Senor Raphael Valdez, and he is Miguel, and we are relatives of your mother, if you are the son of Mortimer Hamilton."

"I certainly am," responded the youth, in puzzled tones, "but I thought your name was Alantrez."

"I changed my name when I lost my money, as I was too proud to let my friends know of my misfortune," went on Senor Valdez, as we must now call him, "but we really are the last of the Valdez family, as I shall soon convince you. We are your mother's relatives, though I never suspected it, for the name Hamilton is not uncommon. Please to be seated, senor, and I will relate our story to you," and the Cuban politely waved Dick to a seat on the sand.

"And to think that I have been chumming with you all this while, and never knew you were my relatives!" cried the young millionaire. "This beats a story in a book. Go ahead, senor, tell me all you can, and then we'll hurry back to camp with the good news."

CHAPTER XXVIII

BUILDING A RAFT

Senor Raphael Valdez was not long in proving the identity of himself and his son. Several years back he had fallen in love with a Miss Rose Martin, who was Dick's mother's cousin. He had married her, taken her to Cuba, where he had large possessions, and, after many years of happiness she had died, leaving him an only son. When the war with Spain broke out, all of the wealth of Senor Valdez was swept away, and he became poor.

Unwilling to let his friends know of his plight—for his was a proud Spanish nature—he changed his name, and he and his son set out to mend their broken fortunes. But it was hard work, and for years he struggled along, concealing his whereabouts to such advantage that none of Mr. Hamilton's inquiries located him.

Finally Senor Valdez, under the name of Alantrez, secured a place with the government, in Santiago, his former home, but he and his son had so changed in appearance that none of their

former friends knew them, and they had no near relatives.

All this the elder Cuban related to the young millionaire, as they sat on the sands at the foot of the signal mast.

"And that accounts for the likeness of you and my son," finished Senor Valdez. "He has some of the Martin blood in his veins, I am glad to say, and I am proud that your mother, Senor Hamilton, was related to the Martin family."

"So am I," added Dick, "and I'm happy that I have found you. I have been able to fulfil the mission my mother left unfinished, and also clear up dad's property affairs. I hope you will not be too proud, senor, to accept help from me," he continued wistfully, for Dick liked nothing better than to help other people. Besides, there is a tenth share of the property in New York coming to you."

"You have already placed me so much in your debt that I am overwhelmed," said the Cuban, warmly.

"Then you might as well let me make a complete job of it," spoke Dick, quickly, with a laugh. "But, suppose we start back. The others may be getting anxious."

Senor Valdez returned to his pocket certain papers, by which he had proved his identity, and arose.

"Come on, Cousin Miguel," Dick said to the

Cuban lad. "I'm going to call you cousin, from now on, if you don't object."

"I am honored," answered Miguel, with a stately bow.

Exploring part of the beach, near the signal mast, Dick and his two companions found a number of soft clams, of which they gathered a quantity, carrying them in a bag which the kidnappers had left with Miguel.

"We'll have them steamed on a fire in a pile of seaweed," suggested the young millionaire. "It'll be a shore dinner, though the usual fixings will be missing."

They found the whole party assembled on the beach, near the campfire, waiting for them, Paul and Beeby having returned empty handed. There was rather a glum look on their faces.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick. "You look as if you'd lost your last friend."

"We didn't find any grub," explained Beeby.

"But *we* did, and I found something else," went on the lad of millions. "Here are slathers of soft clams. We can't starve while they hold out."

"We saw some like those, but I didn't think they were any good," remarked Beeby. "We were looking for something worth while."

"You'll find these worth while when you're hungry," went on Dick. "Come on, now, fellows, get a good fire going, gather some seaweed and we'll have a feast. But, first, I've got some

news for you," and he proceeded to relate his unexpected, but perfectly simple, finding of the relatives he had come so far to seek.

"It's just like when once I found a whole lot of scrap iron I wasn't expecting," declared Henry Darby, and then he wondered why Dick and the others laughed, hastening to explain, as soon as he saw the joke, that he had no intention of comparing the young millionaire's relatives to iron junk.

While the boys were discussing the strange outcome of the affair, Widdy was busy with the steaming of the clams. In a short time an appetizing aroma filled the air, which caused the boys to inquire anxiously when the "shore-dinner," as they dubbed it, would be ready.

They ate in rather primitive fashion, with fingers doing duty for knives and forks, but they all said they had never tasted any better clams, though there was no drawn-butter to dip them into.

"Now," suggested Dick, as they finished, and wished for more, "we will take an account of stock, and see what's next to be done."

"The bower or bungalow, or whatever you're going to call it, isn't quite finished," said Tim Muldoon.

"It won't take long," was Widdy's opinion; so they all set to work on that, and soon had a fairly good shelter constructed; one that would keep out the cold, and damp night winds.

"Next is the food supply," went on Dick, and when they looked over what the kidnappers had left with Miguel Valdez there were anxious looks on every face, for the quantity was barely sufficient to last them a week.

"There's only one thing to do," declared Dick, grimly, "we will have to go on short rations until we are rescued, or until we can get away from this place."

"And when will that be?" asked Beeby, nervously.

"How about it, Widdy?" inquired Dick of the old sailor; "are any vessels likely to pass this way?"

"Not many," was the response. "We're out of the track of most vessels, though, of course, there's always the chance of a tramp steamer seein' our signals. As the flagpoles are on both sides of the island, they can hardly miss 'em."

"Well, we won't sit down and wait for some one to come along," decided Dick, after a moment's thought. "If we want to get away from this place we've got to help ourselves."

"And how's that?" inquired Paul. "Are we going to build a boat, like Robinson Crusoe did, out of a hollow tree?"

"Not much," declared Dick. "We haven't any tools to make a boat, but we can build a raft, and float away on that, and perhaps get in the track of some steamer; eh, Widdy?"

"I think so, Mr. Dick. We'll try, anyhow."

"But how can we build a raft?" asked Beeby. "Do you expect us to cut down trees with our pocket-knives? It can't be done, Dick. We're in a bad way, and our only hope is a steamer sighting us."

"You get out!" cried Dick, vigorously. "We may starve before a steamer comes. We've got to get afloat before all our grub is gone, and that means we'll have to build a raft at once. I saw a lot of dead trees in the woods. They're light, and will float well. Then we can cut down some others with the hatchet."

"And tie 'em together with a fishline, I s'pose?" added Beeby, gloomily.

"Not at all, but if you've got a fishline I can see what you're going to be up against," spoke the young millionaire, quickly. "Go off and try to catch some fish, Beeby. We can fasten our raft together with wild vines. I tripped over enough in the forest to make a dozen rafts, and they're almost as strong as wire cable. Now, get busy, fellows, and we'll soon be afloat again."

Dick's enthusiasm and energy were contagious. In a short time they were all busy dragging small dead trees from the woods to the beach. The logs were laid criss-cross, and under Widdy's direction, were tied together with strong, trailing vines, of which there were many available.

To make the raft more secure, they cut down, with the hatchet, a number of saplings, which were bound in and out among the larger logs,

giving them the necessary stiffness. At the close of the first day they had a large raft, capable of holding them all, and it was nearly ready to be floated.

"But it must have more wood in," decided Dick, as they sat about the campfire that night, eating a scanty ration which was served out. "We may encounter a storm, and the more wood we have in our craft the higher it will ride. Then we must build a sort of platform on which to store our food and water, and we'll also rig some life-lines, of the vines, to keep us from pitching overboard."

"Right you are, my hearty! All regular and shipshape!" exclaimed Widdy. "We'll get away from this place, and catch those kidnappers yet, split my lee scuppers if we don't!"

"And get my yacht back, too, I hope," added the young captain. "I'd like to know who has her."

If Dick had been able to peer into the comfortable cabin of his yacht at that moment he would have been very much surprised at the sight which would have met his eyes.

They renewed work on the raft next morning, after a more comfortable night spent in the bower than was their first. Other logs and saplings were added to the rude craft, and a platform was constructed out of driftwood, and pieces of the boxes in which the kidnappers had left food for the young Cuban.

"There, that will keep our stuff dry for a while, anyhow," remarked Dick. "Now about taking some fresh water along; what would you advise, Widdy?"

"Water's going to be our worst trouble," declared the old sailor. "But we've got quite a few tins that's had food in 'em. We can fill those, and by only taking a small sip when we're dry it may last us until we are picked up. If it doesn't——" He did not finish, but the boys knew what he meant—they would suffer terribly.

For two days more they worked on the raft, for they knew their very lives would depend on its stability, and Dick would take no chances. They even made a sort of awning on it—a shelter from the sun—using old bags. Then a good-sized cask was luckily cast ashore by the tide, one morning, and that served admirably to hold a good supply of water.

All this while a sharp lookout had been kept for passing vessels, but, though once or twice smoke from steamers, hull down on the horizon, had been seen, none approached the island, and the tattered signals fluttered desolately in the wind. But Dick and his marooned chums were too busy to give up hope.

"If we only had more food I wouldn't worry so much," said the young millionaire, the night before they were to start off on the raft. "Our supply is getting lower, and, though we can take along a lot of clams, and maybe catch some fish,

it's going to be mighty small eating for a while, fellows."

"I had pretty good luck catching fish to-day," announced Beeby. "Maybe we can get a lot and smoke 'em!"

"The very thing!" cried Dick. "We'll wait another day, and take along a supply of smoked fish."

They crawled into the bower that night, and stretched out on beds of dry seaweed, wondering and fearing what the morrow would bring forth.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE RESCUE

With soft clams for bait, Paul Drew and Tim Muldoon made up the fishing party next day, while Dick, Henry and Widdy, aided by the two Cubans, put the finishing touches on the raft. Beeby went off with his camera, which he had brought to the island. He said he wanted to get some last views of the place where they had been marooned.

The fishing, which was done off some rocks that jutted out from shore, was good, and soon the two youths had a fine supply. The old sailor cleaned them, and then, laid on a network of sticks, over a slow fire, the fish were smoked, to preserve them for use as food when the voyage of the raft should have been started.

The tins and cask were filled with water, and fastened to the raised platform in the centre of the craft. What little food remained was carefully stored aboard, together with as many soft clams as could be gathered.

"We can catch some fish as we sail along," re-

marked Frank Bender, "but we'll have to eat them raw."

"Raw? Not a bit of it!" cried Dick. "I've just thought of something. We can make a stone fireplace aboard the raft, and take along some wood. Then, when it doesn't rain—and it's not likely to for a while—we can cook. I never thought of that before, but I've often seen fires built on big lumber rafts, and ours is large enough. We won't have to eat our fish raw, if we're lucky enough to catch any. And another thing, I'm going to rig up some sort of a sail. We can do it with pieces of the bagging. Then we can get some motion beside that of drifting. Oh, before we get through with this we'll have a regular ocean steamer," and he laughed gaily.

He was soon constructing the fireplace on the raft, with a bed of dirt beneath the stones to avoid danger from fire. Henry Darby helped, and Frank Bender gathered a supply of dry wood, which was stored in one of the wooden boxes under the platform. Then a mast, with a boom at top and bottom, to hold distended a square sail of bagging, was made, and erected.

"Now, we begin to look like something," declared Dick, as he surveyed the raft. "We'll float her at high tide to-morrow, and then we'll see how she rides. She may not be as swift as my steam yacht, but she'll answer, I hope."

"What are you going to christen her?" asked Henry.

"Guess we'll call her the *Albatross II,*" said Dick, and that name was selected.

It was now time for the scanty dinner, which was all that could be served, for rations were scarce, when Beeby came panting from the woods, and dashed down the beach toward his companions, who were grouped around Dick.

"I got 'em!" he cried. "I got 'em!"

"Got what?" asked the young millionaire, anxiously.

"A whole lot of birds! They're like chickens, nice, and plump, and fat! I got 'em. I sneaked up on 'em, and they didn't hear me, and I got 'em! They ought to make fine eating!"

"Good for you!" cried Dick. "Like chickens, eh? Well, we'll wait dinner and cook some now, and also take some cooked ones along on the raft. You're all right, Beeby, if you are fat. Where are they, and how many did you kill?"

"Kill? I didn't kill any!" was the surprising answer. "I meant that I snapshotted 'em. I'll make a dandy picture! There must have been a hundred birds! I used my last film on 'em!"

For an instant Dick looked at the fat cadet. The hope that had risen high in all their hearts was rudely dispelled. Beeby gazed about, trying to understand wherein he had offended, for the silence was ominous.

"Throw him down, and stuff sand in his mouth!" cried Dick, at length. "The idea of telling us you have a whole lot of birds like chickens,

and we about to eat some scraps of corned-beef, and cold clams, and then, when our mouths are all watering, you say you snapshotted 'em! Snapshotted 'em! You ought to be made eat some fricasseed clam shells, Beeby."

"Why—why, didn't you want me to take a picture of 'em?" asked the stout youth, blankly.

"Take a picture of 'em? Why, in the name of the sacred cat, didn't you shoot some for dinner?" asked Dick.

"I—I didn't have the rifle. But I'll go back and see if I can pot some. There are hundreds of 'em."

"No, we'll have grub first, and then we'll see what we can do. It sounds good, and I guess, after all, you're entitled to a vote of thanks, Innis, for discovering them."

Dick and Beeby went hunting that afternoon, and the young millionaire, who was a good shot with the rifle, managed to get a number of the plump birds. They were roasted, and furnished a good supper, while a quantity of the cooked fowl were put aboard the raft for future use.

The next morning, bidding farewell to the desolate island, where they had been marooned for nearly a week, the little party floated the raft at high tide, got aboard, and, hoisting the rude sail, while Widdy steered with a sweep, which he had improvised from a sapling, and a board from a box, they set off—for where they did not know.

There was a light wind, and the day was fair, and Widdy, who had all the instinct of an old salt, headed the raft, as well as he could, toward Cuba. They did not hope to reach it, or, rather, they hoped they would be picked up before having to sail so far.

Of their voyage on the raft they talked for many years afterward, for it was a novel experience. At first, it was not so bad, for the sea was calm, and they even built a fire and cooked some fish which they caught. Senor Valdez volunteered to serve in the "galley," as Dick called it, the Cuban gentleman proving an expert chef, even with such rude facilities at his command. He and his son were jolly good companions, as well, for, now that they had each other, no hardships seemed too much for them.

The raft, naturally, made slow progress, but to the boys anything was better than remaining on the lonely island, waiting for a vessel to take them off.

For three days they sailed on, uneventfully. They had enough to eat to keep them from feeling hungry, though there was no great variety, and they had water to drink, though it was flat and warm. They even managed to get some sleep on piles of seaweed which had been put on the raft.

But the sea, as if tired of being so calm, kicked up a fuss on the fourth day out, and waves began to come aboard. The fire was put out, and some of the tins of water washed overboard. This was

a severe loss, for their scant supply was getting lower each hour. They were wet and miserable, and when it came on to rain, the only consolation in the storm was that they caught a little fresh water.

The next day proved hot and muggy, when the body seemed to want as much water as a sponge. Dick, backed up by Widdy, would let only a little of the fresh fluid be used. The boys were advised to keep their bodies wet, as this helped to slake their thirst. There was little difficulty in this, as the spray and waves kept every one aboard the raft more or less soaked.

They had to eat cold victuals, and on the fifth day, even these were limited in quantity, for the food was giving out.

It was a forlorn and weary raft of adventurers that sailed slowly over the sea, with every one aboard straining his eyes for a sight of a ship that would rescue them.

"It certainly is tough," murmured Beeby, when he was allowed but a mouthful of water. "Terribly tough! I'm awful dry!"

"Think of something else!" counseled Dick. "We may be picked up to-morrow."

They were not, though, and with their supply of food down almost to nothing, and only a little water left, their situation was desperate. Poor Grit whined and looked up into Dick's face, as if trying to understand why he did not have all the meat and water he wanted. The young million-

aire (and what a mockery his wealth seemed to him then) shared his rations with the dogs, but would not allow the others to deprive themselves of any of theirs. Dick only drew his belt tighter, and gazed off into space, hoping against hope that he would see a ship. He wet his parched lips, and prayed silently—not so much for himself, as for the others, while Grit whined at his feet, and licked his hand.

The little puppy, not being able to stand the strain, died, and, rather sorrowfully, they cast him overboard.

It was on the ninth day out—a hot, broiling day—when the sun seemed fairly to sizzle through the bagging awning, and force out every drop of moisture from one's body. There was not an ounce of water left, and death stared them in the face. They lay about the raft limply, almost too weak to speak.

It was Widdy who first saw the approaching ship. At first he feared his eyes were deceiving him, and he rubbed them, and stared again and again, to make sure, before he ventured to cry out:

"Sail ho!"

They all leaped to their feet with new strength at his words, and gazed where he pointed. At first it was but a speck, but they shouted and waved any rag or piece of clothing they could catch up. Of course, their feeble voices did not carry, but they must have been seen, for, pres-

ently, when the ship was made out to be a steamer, they saw the course changed, and she bore down upon them.

"We're saved, thank God!" gasped Dick, and there were tears in his eyes, while Grit, as if catching the spirit of hope, leaped about, and barked joyously.

An hour later they were aboard the steamer *Trascaron,* and were being fed cautiously on soup and weak tea, while their raft was abandoned, and with thankful hearts they learned that they were aboard a vessel bound for Santiago.

"And when we get there I'm going to hire another yacht, and search for mine!" declared Dick, with something of a return of his former energy.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PURSUIT

No BAD effects followed our friends' exposure on the raft, and starved bodies were soon well nourished by the good food supplied aboard the *Trascaron,* whose captain could not do enough for the young millionaire's party.

Dick asked eagerly for news of his missing yacht, but could obtain none, and was forced to content himself until they arrived at Santiago. There his first act was to send a cablegram to his father, telling something of Uncle Ezra's daring acts, how they were marooned on the island, and of his intention to search for the *Albatross.*

Incidentally, Dick asked for some money, since most of his was aboard the stolen yacht, and Mr. Hamilton promptly cabled a large sum, sufficient to hire a steamer for a month. Dick, after fitting himself and friends out with new clothing, next visited the lawyer, whom he had engaged to search for the Valdez family, informing the attorney that no further steps were necessary. The Cuban father and son were installed in comfortable rooms in the hotel where Dick and his com-

panions were quartered, and Senor Valdez was told that Mrs. Hamilton, his wife's cousin, had made ample provision for him, so that he could set up in business again.

Senor Valdez and his son also signed certain papers in reference to the property in New York, clearing the title, and making it unnecessary for them to leave Cuba. They would receive their tenth share of the value of the land, which, with what provision Mrs. Hamilton had made for them in her will, placed them beyond the reach of want.

"And, now that's done, I'm going to get busy on my own account, and find my yacht," remarked Dick one evening to his chums, as they sat in the parlor from which their sleeping-rooms opened.

"Yes, it's time you did something for yourself; you've had us on your hands long enough," remarked Paul.

"Well, we had lots of fun, even if we were marooned, and nearly shipwrecked," declared the young millionaire.

Negotiations for the hire of a small, but swift, steamer were completed the next day, and Dick and his friends went aboard. Of course, Grit went also. Inquiries had failed to throw any light as to who might have stolen Dick's yacht and launch from Stone Island, nor was any trace found of the steamer *Princess,* containing Uncle Ezra and the men and two youths whom he had hired to kidnap Dick.

"Then, if you can't get any trace, how are you

going to know in which direction to search?" asked Beeby. "You can't cover all the waters around Cuba."

"I don't intend to," replied Dick. "In the first place, Captain Barton, and the others of the crew are—or were—aboard my yacht when it was captured. They are either aboard her now or they have been put ashore somewhere by the thieves. In the latter case, we will hear something from them sooner or later, for they'll communicate with us, and we'll get a clue to work on. If they are still held as prisoners, I'll have to adopt a different course."

"And what'll it be?" asked Paul Drew.

"Why, I think our best plan is to sail back to Stone Island."

"Stone Island?" cried Henry Darby.

"Do you mean to camp out there again?" asked Frank.

"No, we had enough of that," answered the wealthy lad. "But I have an idea that the men who stole my yacht have a sort of headquarters on that island. We didn't have time to look for it, but it must be there. What would be more natural than that they will either hang around in that vicinity, or even visit the island."

"Hardly that, if they think we are there still," objected Beeby.

"That's just it. They may think we have been taken off by some steamer, and that the coast is clear, so that they can come back. If they do we

have them, and so I think our best plan is to set sail for the island where we were marooned."

"I guess you're right, Dick," admitted Paul.

The next day the *Golconda,* which was the steamer Dick had hired, slipped away from her dock, and headed for Stone Island. Aboard her, though the boys did not live as finely as they had in the yacht of the young millionaire, they had a good time, and most of their hours were spent on deck, as they cruised on, looking for a sight of the *Albatross.*

Dick declared that he was getting cross-eyed from so constantly looking through the binoculars, but he would not give up. Many ships were passed, but they proved to be other than the *Albatross.* Nor was the *Princess* sighted.

"I guess Uncle Ezra and his crowd had enough, and went back to New York," ventured Dick. "My uncle is probably in Dankville now, figuring up how much money he lost. Oh, won't I have the laugh on him when I jolly him for kidnapping the wrong person!"

"I'd do more than *jolly* him," said Beeby, vindictively. "He ought to be arrested."

"Oh, Uncle Ezra is a peculiar man," said Dick. "He can make himself believe that he acted just right. He's afraid I'll die a pauper in the poorhouse, I guess."

Forward sailed the *Golconda,* even to Stone Island, but there was no sight of the missing yacht. They anchored in the bay where Dick's

fine craft had previously come to rest, just before the theft, and, cautioning captain and crew to be on their guard, Dick and his chums, well armed, went ashore with Widdy, who was now one of their party.

But there was no trace of any visitors since they had left to make the voyage on the raft, and they found their camp desolate, and undisturbed.

"Well, I guess I was wrong, thinking they'd come back here," said Dick, rather disappointed, when, after a day spent on the island, they prepared to go back on board the steamer. "But we'll search farther."

They did, and the voyage was kept up for a week, sailing here and there, but always in the vicinity of the island. Once they returned to Santiago to inquire if any news had been heard of either ship, but none had. Then they began their search of the waste of waters again, stopping at or near several small islands or keys, and inquiring of many vessels which they spoke as they manœuvred about.

"My yacht seems to have disappeared from this vicinity," admitted Dick, ruefully, when the second week was half gone. "I guess I'll have to give up."

"Don't you do it, matey!" exclaimed old Widdy, smashing his pipe down on deck, a favorite diversion of his whenever he was excited. "Keep after 'em! You'll find 'em yet, split my lee scuppers if you won't!"

And so the young millionaire resolved not to give up just yet.

It was on the last day of the second week, when, as they were cruising about almost within sight of Stone Island, that they saw the smoke of a steamer, which seemed bearing down in the direction of the place where the kidnapped youth had been left.

"Here comes a ship," spoke Beeby, who was using the glasses.

"Let me see?" requested Dick, and he took a long view. "I don't believe it's my yacht," he said, "yet it's coming in this direction, and very few ships have trade or business in this locality. Captain, I think we'll steam forward and meet her."

The young millionaire's word was law aboard the ship he had hired, and, accordingly, the *Golconda* was put about, and headed toward the unknown vessel.

This soon gave them a better view, and the boys crowded around their host, anxious for the first word that would proclaim if it was the yacht they sought, or some other craft.

"Dick's eyes were glued to the binoculars, as he stood on the bridge, peering eagerly forward.

"Is it her?" asked Beeby.

"I can't quite make out. She looks something like the *Albatross,* yet the funnel is a different color."

"Maybe they painted it again, to deceive peo-

ple," suggested Henry Darby. "Why—look—she's turning around!"

They all stared in wonder, for the vessel, for some reason, was swinging about in a big circle, retracing her course.

"Can we go a little faster?" asked Dick of the captain.

"*Si,* senor," was the reply, and the engine room telegraph clanged out an order. The *Golconda* leaped ahead.

As the boat, to which the gaze of all was directed, swung around, so that her stern was toward the vessel containing Dick and his chums, the young millionaire uttered a startled cry. Passing the glasses to Paul Drew, and bidding him look, Dick exclaimed:

"It's her! It's my yacht! It's the *Albatross!*"

"It sure is," agreed Paul, a moment later. "I can read her name under the stern."

"After her!" fairly yelled Dick. "After her, captain! Use every ounce of steam you can, for we *must* catch her!"

"I'll go down in the engine room and talk Dutch to the firemen," volunteered Widdy, who had the privilege of the bridge. He hastened away, while Dick took another view of his yacht, that was steaming away from him so rapidly. But the *Golconda* was increasing her speed also, and the "bone in her teeth" grew larger in size, while the screw threshed the water at the stern more violently. The pursuit was on.

CHAPTER XXXI

"MAN OVERBOARD!"—CONCLUSION

OF THE eagerness with which he watched the chase, and noted the distance between the two vessels, Dick was hardly aware at the time. But he realized that he was under a great strain, and none more strongly than when he found he could scarcely open his cramped hands from holding the binoculars, through which he was looking at his yacht. He tried to make out figures aboard the steamer, but could not.

"Why do you think they turned about and ran?" asked Paul.

"They probably suspected something," replied Dick. "They saw us headed toward them, and got frightened."

"Do you think you can catch up to her?" asked Beeby. "She's going at a pretty good clip."

"The time was when I wanted my yacht to be swift," answered Dick, "but now I wouldn't care if she was a regular canal boat—until I boarded her. But this steamer's got some speed, too, and I am hoping that those on the *Albatross* won't know

how to get the best out of her. In that case, we can overhaul her."

But it was not going to be an easy task, as was soon demonstrated. The *Golconda* closed up part of the gap between her bow and the stern of Dick's yacht, and that seemed all she was able to do. The stern chase was kept up, and was likely to prove a proverbially long one.

Then, whether Widdy succeeded in infusing some of his own eagerness into the firemen, or whether the *Golconda* took it into her own notion to do better, was not apparent, but, at any rate, she did several more knots an hour, and toward the close of that afternoon, Dick was made happy by seeing his stolen yacht nearer to him.

"We must get her before dark, or she'll slip away in the night," he said .

"*Si,* senor," replied the Spanish captain. "We will have her soon, now. They are losing speed."

And it did seem so. Little by little the *Golconda* crept up. Persons aboard the *Albatross* could be seen hurrying to and fro on deck, but Dick could not make out who they were.

"But we'll board her, and put them in irons, whether they're pirates, with the reputation of Captain Kidd, or not," declared the young millionaire, savagely.

Nearer and nearer raced the pursuing vessel. The two were now but half a mile apart, and every moment was lessening the distance. Dick was in a fever of impatience, fearing something

would happen that would allow the thieves of his yacht to escape with her.

"We'll have her in half an hour more!" he cried. "Eh, captain?"

"*Si,* senor. Perhaps in less. I will see——"

He did not finish the sentence. Instead he half uttered a cry of astonishment, and pointed toward the *Albatross.* Dick looked, and saw a figure shoot over the rail of his yacht, and fall into the sea with a splash.

"Man overboard! Man overboard!" he yelled, as if those aboard his own swift vessel could hear him.

"Why—why—they're not going to stop to pick him up!" cried Beeby, who was beside his wealthy chum. "They're going to let him drown!"

"He's struggling in the water!" announced Paul Drew.

"Shall I——" began the captain, looking at Dick. The young millionaire knew what was meant. In the name of humanity they must stop and lower a boat to save the man in the sea, for the *Albatross* was keeping on, at unslackened speed. Dick hesitated. The *Golconda* was nearing the struggling figure. To stop meant that his yacht ahead would draw further away—she might so increase her distance that it would be impossible to catch up to her before dark—and then—Dick knew the chances were slim of ever seeing his craft again. Yet he hesitated only for a moment.

"Lay to, and lower a boat, captain," he said quietly. "We can't let the poor fellow drown." No one knew what it cost Dick to say those words.

The engine room telegraph clanged out an order to slow up. Almost at once the effect was apparent. The *Albatross* seemed to shoot ahead. A boat was quickly lowered from the *Golconda,* and the Spanish sailors soon had rescued the man in the water. A limp and wet figure he lay in the bottom of the small craft, as it was rowed back to the steamer's side. Dick was gazing at his fast-fleeing yacht, and he could scarcely keep down a lump in his throat. There was a mist before his eyes. He thought she was gone forever.

The rescued man was hauled up on deck.

"Get under way as quickly as you can, captain," ordered Dick, as the boat was hoisted to the davits. "We may catch them yet."

"*Si,* senor."

Dick strolled off the bridge to inquire how the half-drowned man was getting on, and also, to learn, if possible, the identity of the men who had stolen his yacht.

The rescued one was sitting up on deck, in a steamer chair, having recovered consciousness, due to the rough and ready treatment of the sailors. Dick saw an elderly man, with a little bunch of white whiskers on his chin. He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

Grit, at his master's heels, growled ominously. The hair on his back stood up, as it only did when he saw some one whom he hated, and who disliked him.

"Quiet, Grit!" said Dick, in a low voice.

At the sound of the lad's words the man, who was covered with a blanket, arose unsteadily to his feet. Dick could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Ah—er—is it you, Nephew Richard?" asked the rescued one, slowly.

"Uncle—Ezra—Larabee!" gasped the young millionaire. "Is it possibly you?"

"What's left of me—yes—Nephew Richard. Oh, I've had a fearful time—I almost drowned, and those terrible men took all my money. Oh, it was awful! Never—never again will I undertake such a task, no matter who I try to save!"

"Did those pirates capture you, too, as well as my yacht, Uncle Ezra?" asked Dick.

"No—I—I captured your yacht, Nephew Richard," gasped Mr. Larabee, slowly. "But it's a long story, and I 'm too weak to tell it now. I—I fell overboard, trying to look and see how near you were to us! Oh, I thought I'd drown, but you saved me! I—I—thank you!" The words seemed to come unwillingly.

"You—captured—my—yacht?" asked Dick, slowly, wondering if he had heard aright.

"That's what I did—but it was for your own good, Nephew Richard. I'm too weak to talk more now. Please get me some medicine. I

know I'll catch rheumatism from getting wet, and then I'll have a doctor's bill to pay."

"Take him below—to my stateroom," ordered the young millionaire. "I'll see him later. Now to try and get my yacht. The idea of Uncle Ezra having taken her! I never dreamed of it! I can't understand it."

Dick hastened to the bridge again. It was getting dusk, and he feared the chase would be useless. He was met by Widdy.

"She's stopped! She's laid to, Mr. Dick!" cried the old salt.

"Who has?"

"Your yacht! She's waiting for us—she's coming to meet us! I guess they're giving up!"

Dick, scarcely able to believe his eyes, peered off in the direction of the *Albatross*. True enough, she was swinging about and approaching the *Golconda*. Dick could not understand what it meant.

He did a little later, though, when, having come within hailing distance, the Spanish steamer having been brought to a stop, Dick, looking across the intervening water, saw Captain Barton waving his hand to him.

"Captain Hamilton ahoy!" cried the old skipper. "Are you all right?"

"Yes! How about you? Is my yacht safe?" yelled back Dick.

"Aye, aye! My crew and I have been the prisoners of a gang of dastardly scoundrels, up to within a few minutes ago, when we broke out,

and took command again. I've got the villains in irons in the brig, but your Uncle Ezra is missing. He fell overboard and was drowned, they tell me."

"No, we have him here," shouted Dick. "It's all right, but there's lots to be explained. I'm coming aboard."

Ten minutes later he was on the deck of his own yacht once more, shaking hands with Captain Barton, while Grit was frisking joyously about, even making friends with Hans, the cook.

"And they made you prisoners, did they?" asked Dick of the commander.

"Yes, and we've been locked up ever since they sneaked up on us at the island, and took the vessel."

"But dey didn't shut me oop," explained Hans, the cook, proudly. "Dey vanted some one to make noodle soup for dem, und dey left me loose. Den I bakes a pie, und I puts in it alretty a file und a saw, und vat should happen but dot Captain Barton he gets der pie und saws mit 'em his way out alretty yet. Yes—no?"

"That's how it happened," declared the commander, with a glance of approval at Hans Weyler. "But how did you ever get on our track, Dick? I was afraid you had died on that island."

"I'll tell you all about it," promised the young millionaire, "but first let me know whom you have locked up as prisoners? Are they a regular band of pirates?"

"They're the same fellows who, under the misdirected ideas of your Uncle Ezra, tried once before to kidnap you," said the captain. "Locked up in the brig are Sam Newton and Ike Murdock, and with them are two young acquaintances of yours—Guy Fletcher and Simon Scardale!"

"Well, wouldn't that jar you!" exclaimed Dick, weakly. "I never suspected they had my yacht. And Uncle Ezra, too! Well, it's been a series of wonders all the way along! But is the yacht damaged?"

"Not a bit, only those fellows didn't know how to sail her. Ike and Sam brought some of their crew aboard, and I've got them in irons, too, though they aren't really to blame, as they only did what they were hired to do. Now for explanations."

They were soon briefly told. Beginning from the time when he cast anchor in the little bay, off Stone Island, and Dick and his chums went ashore in the launch, Captain Barton told of the capture of his vessel. He and his crew suspected nothing when they saw the yacht's launch approaching, and it was not until Newton and Murdock, in company with a number of lusty and savage men, had gained the deck, and attacked Captain Barton and his crew, that any hint of foul play was suspected. Taken unawares, the commander of the *Albatross* and his men could do little. They were locked up below, and what happened after that they learned from time to time.

The launch was hoisted aboard by the kidnappers, and the anchor gotten up. Then out from a small bay, where she had been hidden, came the steamer *Princess,* containing, among others, Uncle Ezra, Guy and Simon. With a couple of men left aboard her to steer, the others of the rascally crew, whom Mr. Larabee had hired, took up their quarters on Dick's yacht, which was soon towing the *Princess.*

It seems that after Newton and Murdock had made the blunder, and captured the Cuban youth instead of Dick, they evolved a plan to redeem their mistake. They learned, by skilfully questioning the youth, that Alantrez was not his real name, and, forcing him to tell his true one, and knowing something of the quest of the young millionaire, they figured out that the Cuban was the relative whom Dick was seeking.

They planned to leave young Valdez on Stone Island, with enough food for a long stay, and then the kidnappers sailed away, touching at a small seaport to send the letter which the Cuban lad's father received.

Newton and Murdock, who were shrewd scoundrels, figured that when the parent of the kidnapped boy learned that he was gone, he would reveal his true name, and that Dick would thus discover his relative. The kidnappers also thought that nothing would be more natural than that the young millionaire would offer the use of his yacht to aid his mother's relative recover his son.

Things turned out just as the scoundrels desired, though not exactly in the order on which they counted, for Dick did not discover his relatives' identity until on the island.

But he did sail for the lonely place, as we have seen, and Uncle Ezra, and the men whom he had hired, were on the watch. The crabbed old man thought that if he could capture Dick's yacht, it would so discourage his nephew that he would give up the cruising notion, and so save his money.

Watching their opportunity, Newton, Murdock and the others stole out from their hiding-place, when Dick and his companions were ashore, seeking for the Cuban, and captured the *Albatross,* as I have said. They had no intention of leaving the young millionaire and his friends to starve, for Mr. Larabee insisted that they must return, and take off his nephew after a few days. They knew there was food enough on the island to last them all for some time.

But dissensions arose among the scoundrels, when they had put out to sea, and quarrels delayed the return of the yacht to the island. In the meanwhile, the *Princess* had been sold, and the entire party went aboard the *Albatross,* the captain and crew of which, with the exception of the cook, were kept close prisoners.

Finally, Mr. Larabee, anxious about his nephew, prevailed upon Newton and the others to return to Stone Island, but Dick and his chums

had set off on their raft. Not finding the young millionaire, and fearing that the entire party had perished, Mr. Larabee was a very much frightened man. He did not know what to do, fearing to return home, and face Mr. Hamilton, yet dreading to leave the vicinity of the island, where he had left his relative after confiscating his yacht.

So the crabbed old man, and his companions cruised about, hoping to hear some news from the marooned party, yet being afraid to venture into port to make inquiries, for they reasoned that search would be made for them, because of the kidnapping. Thus they sailed aimlessly about until the *Golconda* sighted them, and, suspecting from the manner in which she headed directly for them, that she was looking for them, Murdock and his cronies turned and fled, Mr. Larabee urging them to speed away from what he feared would prove to be the grip of the law.

The rest is known; how Mr. Larabee, leaning too far over the rail, to watch the chase, fell overboard and was rescued by the vessel Dick had hired. Captain Barton told how he and his crew, about this time, broke from their prison, having sawed their way out by tools furnished by Hans, the cook. They had a hard, desperate, but short struggle to subdue Murdock and his men, but succeeded the more easily as the firemen and engineers were becoming dissatisfied with Mr. Larabee's treatment of them.

In his turn, Dick told all that had happened to him since sailing away from the island on the raft.

"And now I'm here, and I'm going to stay on my own yacht," declared the young millionaire. "I guess the boys will be glad to come aboard, too."

The two cadets, Henry, Frank and Tim Muldoon were soon in their former staterooms, while Guy, Simon, the two kidnappers, and the men in their employ were told that they would be sent aboard the *Golconda,* to be returned to Santiago.

"The authorities there can do as they please with them," said Dick. "Senor Valdez and his son can make a charge of kidnapping, if they choose. I'm not going to bother with them, or take them as prisoners to New York. I don't want to see them again. Let 'em go, as far as I'm concerned. They didn't kidnap me."

Guy and Simon pleaded to be taken back home, but Dick was firm. He said he would run no further chances with them, and so, closely guarded, the two unscrupulous youth, together with their older companions, were transferred to the Spanish steamer.

"What are you going to do with your Uncle Ezra?" asked Captain Barton.

"Take him back home," answered Dick. "I guess he's had his lesson," and very glad Mr. Larabee was to be taken aboard the *Albatross.*

"And what are your plans, Captain Hamilton?"

inquired Captain Barton, as the two vessels parted company the next day, the *Golconda* sailing back to Santiago, and the other yacht making toward New York.

"Oh, I'm going to give the boys a good time," announced the young millionaire. "We haven't had much fun, as yet. Too much going on. Now for a quiet cruise, life on some unknown island, if we like, and back home in time for the winter term at the Kentfield Academy. We're out for fun, now."

"But—but, my dear nephew," ventured Uncle Ezra, "it will cost a lot of money to keep this yacht going. I know, for I have spent considerable of late."

"I don't mind," answered Dick. "I'm going to give my friends a good time. I may not have another chance to travel."

But Dick did, as will be related in the next volume of this series, which will be entitled "Dick Hamilton's Football Team; or, a Young Millionaire on the Gridiron," and in which book we will renew our acquaintance with the wealthy lad, and his friends and enemies.

Dick's first act, after straightening out the tangle in which he found himself, was to send a wireless to his father, telling of his safety, and giving, in brief, an account of what had happened. Then the yacht headed for New York, which was reached without incident, save that off Cape Hatteras they went through a severe storm, carrying

away one of the auxiliary masts, and part of the wireless apparatus. Then, after a visit to Hamilton Corners, with his friends, Dick arranged to take his party for a trip along the New England coast, where later they had a fine time, camping on a small island.

Mr. Larabee was a very much subdued man when he got back home. He even tried to pet Grit, but the bulldog would have nothing to do with him, for which Dick was thankful.

Mr. Hamilton was very indignant at his brother-in-law, and was half-minded to take some action against him.

"Whatever possessed you to do such a thing, Ezra?" asked the millionaire. "Why, as I understand it, you tried twice to have my son kidnapped, and nearly succeeded the third time."

"Don't—don't use that word 'kidnapped,' Mortimer," pleaded the old man. "It wasn't really kidnapping. I only wanted to get Dick away a certain time for his own good, until he was over this yachting notion. It was to keep him from wasting his money, since you wouldn't prevent him."

"Of course not; it was his own money," answered Mr. Hamilton. "But do you know you laid yourself liable to a severe penalty of the law, Ezra? You might be given a long sentence, or a heavy fine, for what you did."

"Don't say that, Mortimer," begged Mr. Larabee. "I meant it for the best. I had Dick's interests at heart. Land knows, I lost enough money

as it was, and I was in hopes that you would reimburse me. Hiring steamers is very costly."

"You'll not get a cent from me!" declared Mr. Hamilton, decidedly, "and you can consider yourself lucky if Senor Valdez doesn't prosecute you."

"Oh, dear! I never thought of all that!" exclaimed the old man. "I did it all for Dick's good. I would have treated him well if I had only succeeded in getting him away."

"Well, I'm glad you didn't," said Mr. Hamilton, more softly. After all, he could partly forgive Mr. Larabee, who might honestly have been actuated by what he thought was a right idea.

Mr. Larabee did not stay long in Hamilton Corners. He and Grit did not get on at all well together, and the old man had to be constantly on the lookout for the bulldog, who took delight in hiding in dark places, and unexpectedly making a dash for the old man's legs, growling fiercely. Perhaps the animal would not have bitten him, but Mr. Larabee said it made him nervous. So, after begging Dick's forgiveness, which the young millionaire freely offered, the crabbed old man went back to Dankville, sadder, and, perhaps, wiser, in a way.

Dick, on thinking the whole affair over, came to the conclusion that, after all, he had rather enjoyed it than otherwise, and so had his chums, though they had been in danger at times.

Henry Darby found his old iron business more prosperous than ever. Frank Bender said he felt

so fine from the cruise that he could do a number of new "stunts," and was sure of getting a place in a circus. As for Tim Muldoon, he declared he was going to sell an account of the yachting trip to some New York newspaper, and get a lot of money for it.

Paul Drew and Innis Beeby returned to their homes after the New England cruise, both declaring they had never before so enjoyed a vacation, and, as for the fat cadet, he had enough pictures to stock a photo-supply shop.

Dick kept his yacht in commission until nearly time for the military academy to open, and, in company with Captain Barton and Widdy, and with some of his friends for guests, enjoyed several short cruises.

Murdock, Newton, Guy and Simon dropped out of sight for a time, after being taken to Santiago, where, following a short imprisonment, they were released.

And so ends the story of Dick Hamilton's yachting trip, but it was not the last of the stirring times he had, in which his millions played a part, for he and Grit were destined for other adventures.

THE END.

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